

spare Rib

No 23
20p

P523/
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**Gwen Coleman
on feminism
then & now**

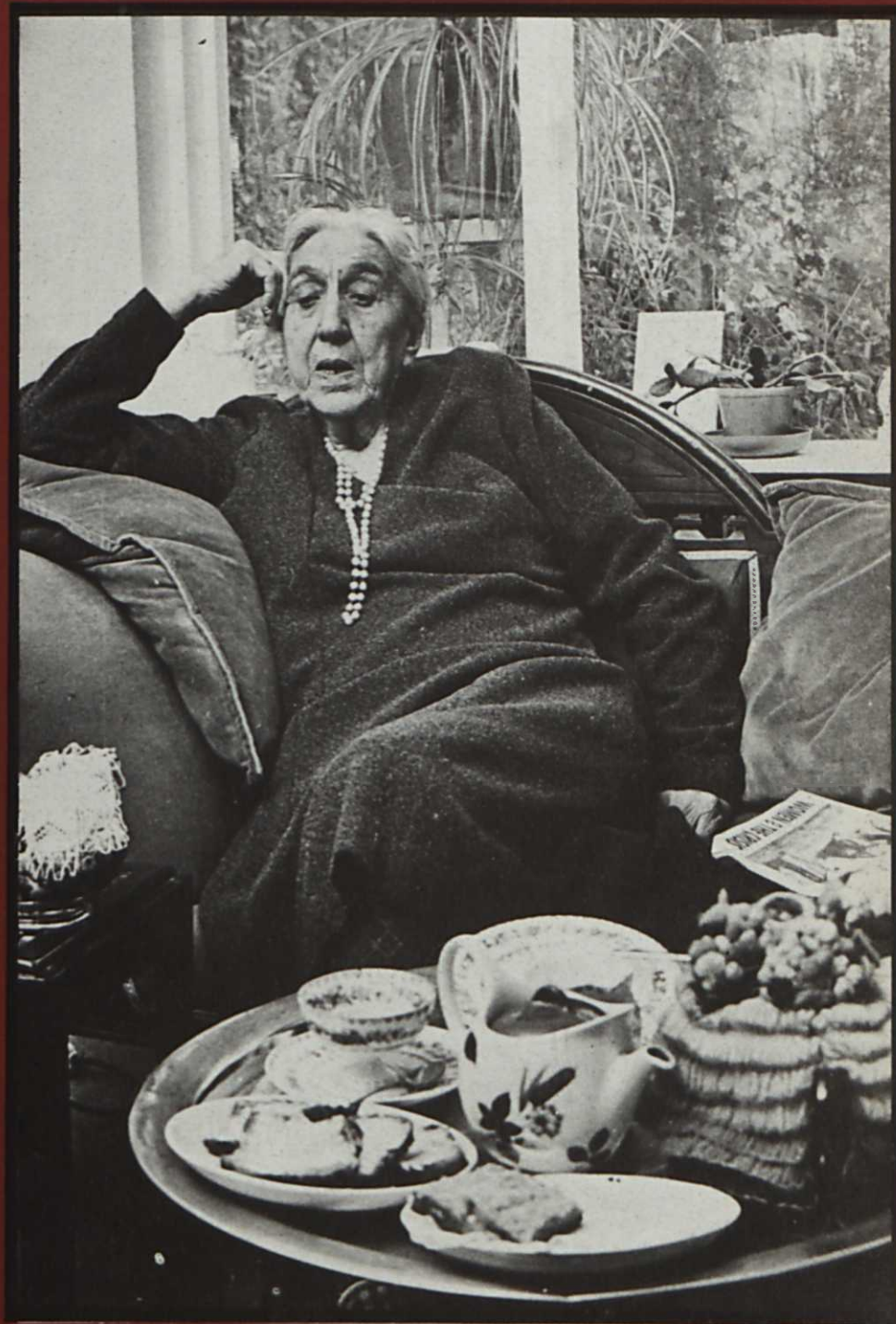
**Living on
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Diaries**



Maggie Bell



Queen of the Night





Women's Page Editors

Dear Spare Rib,

I have read your article on women's page editors with some interest, and I feel that as far as *The Times*, at least, is concerned you have completely misunderstood the situation on this paper. To begin with Shona (not Shauna as you wrote), Crawford Poole is not editor of the second features page; her responsibilities range far beyond that page. Both features pages in *The Times* are planned together and the aim is to achieve an overall balance of subjects to obtain a cohesive whole. If there is any distinction between the two pages - and I do not myself believe there is - the second page deals with people rather than issues. The people may be men, women or children.

We do run two merchandising pages a week. These are not designed to appeal only to women but to anyone who has money to spend although, of course, as 80 per cent of women do the spending in this country there is some bias towards them. I feel you have done Miss Crawford Poole a disservice of describing her as editor of the second features page - her job is a general one and far more important than that of looking after 'for women's features'.

Yours Faithfully,

Margaret Allen,
Features Editor, *The Times*

To begin with I apologise for spelling Shona Crawford Poole's name wrong but this was no fault of my own since I checked with *The Times*. Secondly I thought that I had made it clear that the second features page is not designed to appeal only to women, I was using *The Times* as an example of a newspaper which has attempted to break away from the set 'women's page' formula.

Julia Shaw.

A Child's perception

Dear Spare Rib,

I was interested to read Michelene Wandor's article in No. 19 about *Peter Pan*. I would like to point out that, although I sympathise with her antagonism to the point of view which she presented through 'Bobbie Swinton' I think she somewhat overloaded her case, to the extent of rendering her own standpoint equally questionable: a child, whatever its sex responds, initially, to a basic sensory understanding of its experience. It is only the preconceptions of the so called 'adult world' which impose structure and judgement on its mental faculties. I have noticed from my work with children that any theatrical entertainment appeals primarily to a child's sense of colour, rhythm, timing and excitement. I also remember from my own childhood that no matter what the content, ideology of aim (and these were varied) it was only a very rudimentary sense of plot which I

carried away from the theatre, apart from these sensory perceptions. And it is still true that the eyes of innocence perceive reality in terms of black and white.

I would suggest that Michelen Wandor's interpretation of the play stands up very well as a piece of literary analysis. She perceived and listened however, with the conditioned sense organs of an adult (as conditioned in their own way as those of the fictitious Swinton) without perhaps responding with the same degree of spontaneity as her children.

If one is aware oneself of pain and emotional insecurity then it is possible to see, be aware, of that element which is so obviously in the play itself. Except in exceptional circumstances or in the case of an extremely precocious child, an innocent would be relatively unaware of this. The more simplistic view (ie how sad that Peter and his friends were not loved by their mothers) would spring more naturally to mind.

Yours,

Kate McMorine

Greenwich Theatre.

What Kate McMorine calls 'the more simplistic view' of a child surely illustrates one of the points I made in the 'article' on *Peter Pan*; that it may well be a short step to a child thinking 'Does my mummy love me enough?', or to a mother subconsciously wondering whether she loves her own child enough (after all, we have no evidence of what Peter's mother was like). And while I agree that a young child can't possibly be aware of all the nuances in a play, I don't think one can reduce the complex process of learning about ideas that a child goes through to 'sensory perception'. *Peter Pan* was written by an adult, with an adult's perception of what it was like to be a child, and surely that too must be taken into account. Finally, I agree that it is difficult to know exactly how much a child is picking up in any situation - which was why I suggest that anyone taking their child to see the play should try and discuss it afterwards with the child/children. Personally, I feel in somewhat of a dilemma; I would not recommend anyone to take their children to see the play, but I say that from a double-bind, knowing that the play has raised invaluable sums of money for the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children.

Michelene Wandor

Dissident Blue Eyes

Dear Spare Rib,

Your magazine is excellent, truthful but slightly quirky. My middle aged boy friend who is pretty smart, cynical and bisexual was critical. He sympathises, but thinks the magazine should be more subtle, humorous, cut the politics and be less

strident. I'm inclined to agree with him.

As Germaine Greer says, men conduct themselves with much more grace than women on the battle front, naturally so, as they've had more practice. As you may have noticed their main weapon is ridicule, the next suppression, and in the case of wives, and as a last resort, violence.

Look how men feature behind the scenes in women's magazines. They never express their views openly, but they run things from the top. They make certain they do not leave themselves open to ridicule and all letters from critical readers are simply not published, and alas these magazines sell in their thousands.

I think you should infiltrate the junior magazine market, that's where the damage starts, with 'pop star' and 'girls only' stuff. Don't actually say men are a lot of bastards, imply it. Get the message home to the kids without the men noticing it. Subversion, suggestion, infiltration, fight fire with fire. It works.

Don't teeter on the edge of the publishing market among intellectuals, they've already got the message. It's the working class girls you should go for, but your magazine in its present form just wouldn't get through to them. You need a revamped junior edition very similar in format to the 'populars'. Believe me, I know, I am from a working class background, and still live in one, and the ignorance is appalling.

I was only partly conditioned because I got the message early on in life, and resisted from there. But it was too late even then. I had a rotten job, no training, no money, a lousy home life, so I drifted into marriage to escape (so I thought). It has been misery ever since, my husband and I have slept in separate rooms for the last five years, because I couldn't stand him any more, and as a result, I can ask no favours, as I do not believe in 'submitting' to someone I dislike in order to get a house-keeping increase. I work part-time to make ends meet, as my daughter is only six and has to be taken to school and brought home.

It's the old story, no savings, no hope of a place of my own, I feel sorry for women who have three or four small children, at least I have only one, and there is some hope for me in the future, but at 37 there isn't too much time.

Yours sincerely,

Dissident Blue Eyes (a la *Womans Own*)
Liverpool.

There is a group in America who put out information and consciousness raising under the guise of 'True Romances'

Giving credit where it's due

Dear Spare Rib,

Zoe Fairbairn is wrong on one point in 'The Ones That Got Away' - Raphael Tuck MP did state that the Anti-sex Discrimination Petition was sponsored by the Women's Liberation Movement, when he presented it to Parliament.

As one of the people who had collected signatures I was in the Public Gallery when the petition was presented, and I attended the press conference beforehand with Pat Howe, the Organiser of the Petition. Paphael Tuck was extremely reluctant to use the words 'Women's Liberation' saying that many people do not like anything associated with the movement. Pat, Caryl and myself with strong support from journalist Mary Kenny, managed to persuade him to use the dreaded words.

In sisterhood,
M. Brenda Wilks

Letters

Cosmic Population Explosion

Dear Spare Rib,

I was interested to read in your science feature last month "hitch your rhythm to a star", and while I would not contend that we are able to say that the ideal contraceptive method has yet been discovered, I do think that if most fertile women relied upon astrological or cosmic birth control, the annual unwanted pregnancy figures would soar from the current 250,000. Medical science has enabled us to control our fertility with contraceptives which are nearly 100 per cent effective if used properly and regularly. Why fall back on methods which rely more on luck than fact?

I merely thought that this was worth pointing out to prevent probably unwanted pregnancies among those readers who might have decided to try astrological or cosmic methods of birth control.

Yours sincerely,

Sybille J. Clayton,

Press Secretary, The Family Planning Association.

Treated like a backward child

Dear Spare Rib,

I have meant to write to you for some time on various subjects and letters in your magazine, the main one being in regard to treatment by the medical profession. You have not said much about hysterectomy operations but I would like to tell you of my own experience, which illustrates that what you have said in the past is true.

I first had a cervical smear test some years ago and knew there was something wrong as the friend who went with me was not recalled when I was. I asked time and time again why I was being sent back for more tests each visit but got fobbed off with various platitudes. Eventually a woman doctor I saw explained that I had the first stages of cancer of the womb but even then she said it was 'nothing to worry about'.

One year later after yet another test I was sent to hospital to see a specialist who after 2 visits said he would like me to go in to hospital to have the neck of the womb removed and maybe further surgery would be necessary. He still did not explain further and after much pressing by me, he eventually admitted I had cancer of the womb. I was admitted to hospital 10 days later for a hysterectomy. Everyone was very kind to me but I still felt then and do now that the members of the medical profession treated me as a slightly backward child. I was never told until I pressed for information what was really wrong or what was happening.

Just one thing N can you answer me this? Do you believe all liberal women to be Socialists? You seem to have no time for Tory Women's Liberation.

Yours sincerely,

B. Carole Hughes,
Wolverhampton.

Although there have been certain notable exceptions among women Tory MPs we feel in general that conservative attitudes are incompatible with the liberation of anybody.

Choosing the right union

Dear Spare Rib,

On your 'Advice ... Info ... Odds ... and Sods' page of the 21st edition of Spare Rib you advised Julia Parker not to join the Union of Women Teachers because it 'is a sister body of the National Association of Schoolmasters, a reactionary lot, who've actually campaigned against equal pay'.

The Union of Women Teachers is a union in its own right and does not lean on the shoulders of a 'brother' union. The salary policy of the Union of Women Teachers is to make teaching a career that benefits those who give 25-35 years of service. At the moment the pay structure offers few attractions to those who intend to teach for thirty years, instead it seems to encourage a short teaching career after which many teachers opt for alternatives.

I think it would have been fairer to have given Julia Parker the addresses of all the unions open to women teachers and allowed her to decide for herself which one was best for her.

Yours,

Sheila Legg,
Southampton.

Rape

Dear Spare Rib,

Perhaps other readers interested in rape cases saw a certain item in a Sunday paper on February 24. I feel so incensed that I felt I had to write to you as you published an article on rape and obviously are prepared to speak up about the crimes perpetrated against women. The article in question was a report on a case where three teenage youths entered a woman's flat. One boy raped and stabbed the woman while the other youths were in another room. When the two youths re-entered the room one of them raped the woman after the first youth had released her.

The first boy admitted raping the woman but the article says that the persecution did not proceed with a charge of rape against the second rapist because all the woman's resistance had been overcome by the first rapist.

Is this justice?

We can't all go around praying for deliverance from rapists or British Justice, so it seems we must learn to defend ourselves - how about a series of articles on self defence?

Trust I'm being articulate in my rage.

Regards,

Lydia Duemmel,
Cornwall.

Spare Parts in No. 16 covers self defence from when to scream to where to learn Judo.

Feeling wasted

Dear Spare Rib,

The article on depression, women's worst enemy; for myself I finished my course of typing and got 25 words per minute and can't get a job on that. My grandmother was poor, she had 18 children. My mother had 7, and I with only one feel that they were more fulfilled than I with my one. I think the answer must be living in a commune, at least you wouldn't be lonely. I am gregarious and out going and feel wasted. I tried home helping but that just wore me out. All the best to you all for your efforts and cheer,
Daphne Grant,
Bedford.

Entitled to our own opinions

Dear Spare Rib,

Thank you for yet another excellent issue but I feel I must write about Alexandra Artley's letter (No. 20).

In the first place I don't really see what being a socialist has to do with one's views on abortion. More important I was irritated by Ms Artley's 'contempt' for Shirley Williams opinion on abortion. While knowing that I personally could never have an abortion I certainly feel no wish whatever to interfere, judge, condemn or have contempt for another woman's choice to do so.

Is liberation finding out about ourselves, learning to be ourselves and to understand that we are all individuals, or is it learning to adopt a specific list of beliefs and opinions?

Love,

Jo Ann Crossley,
Sundrum,
Scotland.



Li-Shuangshuang.

back next
month

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Music 46 The industry hasn't a clue how to publicise a woman purely on the strength of her music. A man, yes, but for a woman they need to promote her aura, sex-appeal and image. One woman who has escaped the packaging but suffers the consequences is **Joan Armatrading**.

Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts.

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67 years as a feminist

At 19 Gwen Coleman became western regional organiser for the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies which had an estimated membership of 100,000 by 1913. At the outbreak of war, as a lifelong pacifist, she stopped her organised work with women to join the peace movement. In 1919 she married and went to Rhodesia where she spent 40 years working on interracial educational and cultural projects. She is now 86 and lives with one of her three children near Reading where Amanda Sebestyen went to talk to her about her life, her work in the N.U.W.S.S., the difference between their organisation and the women's movement today.....

How did you get involved with the women's movement in the beginning?

That's rather difficult. I think because my mother who was so advanced in thought a Liberal in Tory county district, and a Baptist. Then going to suffrage meetings I met the secretary of The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in Bath, and she asked me if I would come and be her secretary. I did, and then from there I went that way - that's all there was to it. (The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was founded in 1866 when a new Electoral Reform Bill came before Parliament and the case for women's suffrage was put forward by John Stuart Mill. The N.U.W.S.S. was the largest and oldest women's suffrage organisation. It was non-militant under Mrs Fawcett's leadership and concentrated on education and propaganda work.)

Your family were feminists so it didn't involve a break with them?

No, not at all. My father was dead, though he would have been in favour because he also was quite a rebel. He used to contribute to a newspaper in India for the Indians which was many years ago, when that sort of thing wasn't done. My mother was with me, wholeheartedly, oh yes.

Why do you think you chose a non-militant group?

Well, just because of my makeup. As I've just said I think these things are in you, you can't help it. I remember when war broke out in 1914. I was in Bath walking down the main street, there's a bridge over the street where the railway line runs, and the first trainload of soldiers passed over as a friend of mine and I were walking down, and I said, looking at it, "Well, I don't know anything about it, but I know that I shan't be for the war." I remember in a little paper the writer said "Where has this woman come from?" - meaning me - "she must have come from the States. She is neither pro-German, pro-British or pro anything else. She is an internationalist of the deepest dye." I kept that cutting, I've got it somewhere.

So you felt that for you there was a straight progression from constitutional suffragism to being a pacifist - it was all part of the same feeling? (After all, a lot of militants were pacifists and vice versa, in fact the connection wasn't often made, it seems.)

Yes, I think as I say, it's just the way one's made. I could never see any value in violence and militancy.

Did your organisation ever work with the militants?

No.

Did you ever meet any of them personally?

No. Not very much. One met them, you know, and there was no ill feeling, if you understand, not on our side at any rate, it was just we didn't approve of the methods. Our objects were the same, more or less. The manner of working - marvellous organisation.

Was the NUWSS organised in the same way as the WSPU?

(The Women's Social and Political Union was founded in 1903 by Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel. Their policy was to admit women only and to be independent of any political party.)

Yes, practically the same.

So Mrs. Fawcett was your leader, she gave the orders?

Yes. Well, when it comes to orders, the country was mapped out in sections and we were sent to various sections but when we got there, we were left quite alone. We were just as keen as the headquarters and we tried to get rooms or go to a hotel and as I've said we'd get a local directory and look up who we'd think we'd call on, leave a lot of literature, organise a meeting, try to find a local chairman, some woman or man, well-known in the area and from that form a little group and hope they'd carry on.

Did you just speak about the suffrage when you were talking about women's situations?

Yes, nothing else.

But among yourselves, did you have other ideas about what should happen?

No, I don't remember that other things were talked about. Some of us were socialists and some were good, deep-dyed Tories and I suppose we had little in common except the suffrage, you see. I know sometimes I worked with women whose ideas were totally different from mine, on things national and international but we had that in common and that we concentrated on.

Did you discuss women's work and marriage and other institutions?

No, I don't think so. I think most of us regarded the vote as simply a symbol. I mean we didn't think that being able to go to the polls was the be-all and end-all, and it was just a symbol of women achieving a certain amount of their rights and to a great extent it was a peg to hang a lot of things on - to connect a speech on and all that, because the desire to organise women in the trade unions, the servitude of women in every direction, all those things came in, but the concentration was on getting the vote in the belief that that would open the door for the other things. And it was possible that on some of the other things we wouldn't have all agreed. I don't know that every woman in the suffrage movement would have agreed with women having their own trade unions, for instance, or whether they ought to become a branch of men's trade unions and various other things.



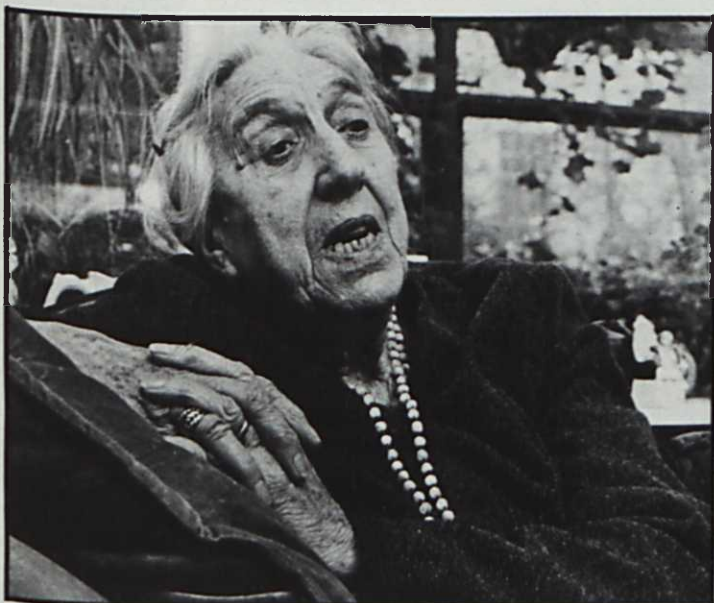
photos Angela Phillips

The Pankhurst group in the last two years before the First World War began to do a lot of propaganda about social purity. (A movement against the sexual exploitation of women, the white slave trade, and the spread of VD) Was your group interested?

Yes, they were, but though I remember selling a good many books about Josephine Butler's (*Josephine Butler campaigned against the Infectious Diseases act which legalised forcible medical examination of women*) work and life, that was about as far as we went. I never remember any discussion about family planning or the things that are to the fore so much these days. Never.

There was a time, you said, when you refused support from a man who had a history of exploiting women sexually.

Yes. As I say, although we didn't bring these things into our speeches yet to some of us it was a very important aspect - it was to me, I know. I was in Bideford and was trying to organise a meeting and I wanted a chairman; two people were suggested to me. One was a colonel, a retired colonel, an elderly man but with really quite a bad name where women were concerned. Yet for some reason or other he supported the women's movement - he said he did. There was another man who was a lawyer in the town and absolutely anti-feminist, but a man of great integrity. So I was getting very near this meeting I was trying to organise and hadn't got a chairman, so I thought I'll have to take the chair myself, that's all. I was walking up the street of Bideford - I can see myself now - and I met this nice lawyer man. He stopped me and said about the meeting, because, of course, the whole town knew, so he said "Have you got a chairman yet?" and I said "No" and he said "Well, why don't you ask Colonel Soandso?" So I looked at him and I said "You know quite well why I don't ask him. He can say he belongs to the women's movement if he likes, but I'm not having a man of his character and his history taking the chair at my meetings." So he said "All right, I'll take the chair for you if that's your reason." And he did. He was very blunt at the beginning. I think he said he didn't know whether he'd been converted or whether he was becoming a supporter, he never had been as everybody knew - but when an under-



current of the women's movement had been brought home to him he thought well, then he could take the chair for us, and of course, he just made the meeting. But I remember two things from that little organisation I made. The other one was a little place near Bideford where there was a very wealthy woman who was a supporter of the suffrage, but she only believed in women who paid rates and taxes having the vote and of course I was very opposed to that, you see. The vote to me should go to the working woman. I invited a friend of mine who was a rabid socialist to come and speak at this meeting. It was a tremendous mistake on my part, of course I ought to have invited someone that was a Tory supporter of the movement to come, but I asked him and he came and we had quite a successful meeting but just towards the end, this lady of the house got up and went to go out of the room and this man speaking there, he didn't get up and open the door for her and she was furious. "The manners of these people!" so he said, "Well, you see I'm in favour of equality for women and I believe a woman is as capable of opening a door for herself as I am of opening for myself. It was no disrespect for you, but to me it would be an insult to pick up a woman's handkerchief or to open the door for her." Those were two things that I remember from that.

Those two things seem to be concerned with whether you had more solid support from women than from men. A lot of people assumed that only the mili-

tant tactics brought women into violent confrontation with men and opened a lot of hidden hostility that men had always held for women. Do you think that when you were engaged in peaceful propaganda you came into the same kind of conflict with men?

No, I don't think we did. I think - I may be totally wrong in this, but I think that a good deal of the opposition the militant women received from men was this - I don't know how you might put it - was this feeling that after all many decent men had and still have an idea of women as being, well, you know, not able to indulge in those tactics, and it was a shock to them more than anything else that made them oppose the women's movement. It wasn't altogether a stupid conception of women, it was an inborn feeling, thinking of their mothers perhaps; they wouldn't like their mother to have slapped someone in the face, it just irritated something inside of them. I think that was what led to a good deal of the men's hostility, because we never had it, we had more opposition and violence from women that we ever did from men. Oh yes, it was women who'd come and break up our meetings, it was a woman who threw rotten eggs, one of the worst things I ever had put over me was a jugful of tealeaves that she'd saved up for a whole week and threw out of the bedroom window as I went by. The women were far more hostile than the men.

Do you think they felt threatened by you? Because you were living a different kind of life?

They may have done. And you know, even educated women, this used to amaze me. You used to go to a place and call on the headmistress of a school for instance, it used to amaze me the number who were opposed to the suffrage movement.

The men, you feel, weren't hostile to the suffrage movement?

They weren't hostile to us in the same way that they were hostile to the militant women. I'm sure of that.

Do you think that was because they didn't feel forced to consider you so seriously?

Well, perhaps so. They felt we weren't so much something to be feared.

Were you connected with men in the trades unions at that time?

No, not so much then. Later I worked a good deal with the t.u.s. and when I was in the pacifist movement during the war. I used to visit t.u.s. and address women's t.u.s. and always had a good reception, even if they didn't agree. Once, I remember again in S. Wales, addressing a huge conference of miners and getting a resolution through against the war and cabling it out to the House. They wouldn't accept that this resolution had been passed, I had quite a job to prove that I'd really got it through, which annoyed me tremendously.

Did the women in the t.u. movement have a hard time with their men, would you say?

Yes, definitely. And I don't think they've won that battle yet, do you? The fight there is one of the last ones to be won, one that's got to be concentrated on just now. Oh, I was very keen on the t.u. movement at one time. I always wanted women to be in the men's t.u.s. I felt, and I still think that when there's a job going that they should be accepted entirely on their aptitude for the job and I've always felt they wouldn't get that unless they were in the same t.u.

What kind of women were for the separate t.u.s, were they militants?

Oh, quite a lot, yes, I think the militants were on the whole. It was one of the things I used to disagree with them about. It's the same I think with one of the difficulties in Rhodesia at the present time - because, of course, the Africans haven't been able to organise themselves in t.u.s. I used to always plead for them to try and form their own t.u. and not try and link on to any European t.u. Thank goodness they are organising their own t.u.s. now.

So your feeling about the movement of African and black people for equality is very different from what you feel about women?

Very different, yes.

Because you accept violence in that struggle, but not in ours?

Well, I don't know if I accept it but I've almost got to the stage when I wonder well, shall I put it this way? I can sympathise with the Africans, understand why they are becoming violent, because I've worked with them so much, and seen how peaceful they are, what they put up with, insults and everything - and one understands now the bitterness and the growing violence, I won't even say I approve of it but I do understand it.

But you couldn't understand violence from women?

No. There's a difference between, shall I say the mental insult and slap-

ping somebody in the face. I mean, we got the other insults – turned out of our rooms and hotels. I mean even in Africa now, in Rhodesia, I know a lot of people who'd cross the road rather than walk on the same pavement as me. I was turned out of my flat because I had African visitors. It doesn't matter what you're in if you're into the suffrage movement or the peace movement or supporting the African today, you're up against the same problem, the same intolerance, the same bitterness, the same lack of understanding. People don't know, they don't trouble to understand what the women were putting up with, what the objects of the suffrage movement were, how women longed for liberation throughout the whole society, and the same with the pacifist movement – we couldn't see any value coming from the world wide fear and violence.

The women's movement split at the beginning of world war I didn't it?

Yes. The night war was declared another speaker and myself were addressing a meeting on Salisbury plain and there was a big crowd there and a large number of soldiers all willing and expected to leave, almost called up, I mean, and one of them called out at the end, "If war is declared, where will the women of England be?" And the other speaker said: "I shall work with all my heart and soul for victory" and I said "Well, I shall work for peace. I shan't take any sides". And that I think was just obvious and it happened all over the country.

When you became a pacifist did you stop all kinds of women's work?

Yes, I did, I left it altogether, but then I gave up all work because I went back to the university and then when I left, I went straight into the pacifist movement.

Sylvia Pankhurst said that women should be for peace, that that was her idea of the women's movement. Did you ever work with her?

No. I knew her, I met her afterwards. She started a creche, didn't she in the East End? I went down there sometimes. But I went out of everything when I started studying and then of course, I was beyond the pale altogether, so feminist and also a pacifist.

The rest of the students weren't with you at all?

Oh no! I was alone. They cut me dead. I think it was quite amusing; the year after I left the university issued a little pamphlet saying what I was doing and this came out as a blank after my name. I was working for the pacifist movement and as far as London University was concerned, that didn't come into recognition. Funny thing, the university were quite sympathetic in a way. We opened these new laboratories. The Queen came and everyone was told to rush round and tidy everything up and I took my sandwiches and sat down and the warden came round and saw me and she said, "Aren't you also getting ready for the Queen?" and I said: "Good gracious, no." and when the Queen came into our laboratory in the afternoon, everybody curtsied and I didn't. But the week after, Bernard Shaw came round and the warden was very kind and said "I think we have a student after your own heart, Mr. Shaw, who would like to meet you" so I was called out to be introduced to Shaw. I thought I really won that one.

Did you ever work on any practical project like a creche?

I didn't, no. When I went to Africa I did all sorts of things like that, I started a little Montessori school. Everything was very backward, there was nothing at all.

Did you marry in Rhodesia?

Yes, that's why I went out in 1919.

Were you surprised to find yourself getting married?

Well, you see, my husband and I had left school together. We's always been friends. He died last December and if he'd lived another year we should have been friends for 70 years and we just grew like that. He always saw things as I did and with regard to my African work, he helped me so much. I think when war was declared over and I was very weary – I'd fought against the war and knew they hadn't fought for the land of freedom and brotherhood they were told they were fighting for, and I think well, anybody who lived through that time became so utterly weary. I know in February after war ended, we were living in Leeds, Mother and I, and things were pretty bad, we couldn't get any firewood or anything. I went for a walk on the moor, gathering firewood. I came to a wall, I stood by this wall and just the other side a lark went up singing. I put my head down on that wall and I sobbed and sobbed. It just was something that this lark had, you know, that we'd done without for so long. Working for peace during the war wasn't easy, it was harder, much harder than working for the suffrage movement, that was child's play compared with what one put up with during the war. I mean you were a traitor to your country, you should have been shot at dawn.

Do you think that kind of exhaustion about the war was the reason why so many women who'd been in the women's movement turned to other things afterwards?

I think so – some of them became religious, some of them did other things, and the split in the women's movement went very deep, you know, one didn't realise it perhaps consciously, but it did.

Were you very disappointed with the result of the vote, or did you feel that some improvements at any rate took place?

Oh yes, definitely, but one wonders how much would have happened if the war hadn't come and they hadn't gone into the war as they did. They achieved so much because they supported the war. I mean, what else could the country do except give them what they did? It wasn't very much.

That must have been very painful to you though, to feel that was why women got the vote

Yes, looking back I think it was, but still they got it.

What did you feel about the first woman MP being a Tory?

I thought that was dreadful. I was nearly the first woman MP myself. I was chosen MP for the Pudsey division of Yorkshire but I wasn't 30 you see – the vote was given to women of 30. All these things are very humorous when you look back.



*The N.U.W.S.S. travelling lorry.
Gwen Coleman is second on the left.*

You said Sylvia Pankhurst was also very interesting?

Yes, I liked Sylvia. She had something I think the others hadn't. I think her vision was broader. She was more a socialist really, a deeper socialist. That book (The Hard Way Up by Hanna Mitchell) is very good and in that it points out that in the very early days the socialists really had a vision of a different world, it wasn't what the Labour movement is today.

Is that why you joined the Independent Labour Party?

Yes. I must have joined the ILP during the war and I was offered an appointment in the ILP but I went out to Rhodesia instead. I was once asked to chair a meeting for Sylvia Pankhurst – in the afternoon I'd been addressing a brotherhood meeting. There was a tremendous crowd, and the organiser came to me and told me what I was to do if the platform was rushed because they expected a row. I was terrified really, however, I got onto the platform and started the meeting, and we always began the socialist meetings in those days by singing a hymn from the soc. song book and I was to give out the number in the songbook and I said "We will commence our service this evening by singing No. so and so" and a whole roar of laughter went up and the meeting progressed from then on, very calmly. A wonderful meeting. At the end the organiser came to me and he said "That was one of the cleverest things I've ever seen done" so I said, "Well, it was sheer nerves, I didn't know I'd done it" but it did save the meeting, strange.

There was another meeting where Sylvia Pankhurst had a cabbage thrown at her?

That was Christabel, I think, one of them, I know. There was a youth at the back and he kept heckling and then someone threw a cabbage and she said "I knew that young man would lose his head sooner or later." I was in the area and heard about it.

And then there was our meeting at Cranbourne on the Great March

when the women marched from all over England to that great gathering we had at Hyde Park and we came up with the group from Lands End. We were 2 weeks on the road and we had a lorry to carry our suitcases and stuff and we also had a little printing press and we printed a little paper, and when we got to Cambourne we were told that if the crowd was with us the students – there was a big mining college there – would be opposed to us. If the people were with us, vice versa. Well, the crowd was against us and they rushed our lorry and we'd foolishly left the horse in and the horse started to bolt. I think that was the most terrifying experience I ever had because we were speaking from the lorry, and it just swayed on this crowd and if it had gone over not only we would have probably been killed but the crowd – so many of them. Some soldiers were amongst the people and they rushed to the horse and managed to grab him and we took the horse into the yard of the hotel where we were staying. I barricaded the doors with the mob outside yelling for us. Two or three of us borrowed some of the young men's suits and we went out and mixed among the crowd and heard all they were saying about us. That was really terrifying, but on the whole we had quite good meetings.

What do you think are the greatest differences between what we're doing and what you were doing in the earlier movement?

Well, you see, I know so little about your work so it isn't fair to make any comment. But although I think you ought to be entirely on your own locally without any instruction, I think a general organisation would be



Postcards from John Fraser collection

Anti-suffragette postcards

helpful, with a head office and a head organiser. Somebody paid and somebody you can scrap and sack if you don't like them. I know how you feel, being ultra democratic myself, you like your own little group but as I say, if you've got some definite piece of work that you want to do, like supporting a bill that's before the House, I don't see how you're to succeed as well without a central organisation. We were quite free to do as we liked – nobody said, do this, that or the other – everybody knew that with our enthusiasm and our love of the work, our devotion to the cause and that, we should get on with the job. But at the same time, take the Great March of the Women, well, that was all organised from H.Q. I'm only seeking for information of how you do work.

We think we do need a central organisation for some kinds of action, but we don't really need one person to be our leader.

No, that's true. But then don't you get much more argument about things?

Well, yes, we do.

Because, after all, if you're keen and you have your own ideas of how things should be done, you all have different ideas and so you'll have a lot of argument.

We do have a workshop and a paid organiser, but she doesn't make policy decisions, we do all that ourselves.

I suppose the difference is really in the women's movement in the old days there was just one object. Having got that then you had these side tracks. Whereas today there are so many things that you're interested in and if you concentrate one group on this and the other on the other, I suppose that's really the basic difference.

There's a big campaign in all countries for legalised abortion free for all women, and I feel that that's going to be the campaign which could take over

in the way that the vote did, and people will turn round when we have that and say "well, what more do you want?" and I think that's the danger, I think that's what was dangerous about the vote. The people who were committed feminists knew that they only wanted the vote as a beginning, but to the world outside, it looked as if the vote was all and you were equal. Yes.

I was going to ask you something about clothes because I think one of the differences between women's liberation now perhaps and what you did is that there's a lot of feeling in the movement against the commercial exploitation of women's appearances. Women have reacted against this by, for example, refusing to pay for cosmetics or dressing in a more casual way. At the same time there's always a chance that by dressing unconventionally you'll alienate people. In the first women's movement it seems that the majority decided to obey conventions as far as dress was concerned.

Yes, well I think we did. Even when I was at school I didn't wear a hat which all those years ago was thought very wrong. But when I went to call on someone whom I hoped I might interest in the women's movement, I thought I should alienate them straight away if I came to their front door without a hat and very untidy hair, so I would wear a hat because to me that was just a small compromise and perhaps worthwhile.

But you never would have compromised about your vegetarianism?

No. Anything that was a real principle I wouldn't compromise about. But on a small thing like whether I wore a hat or I didn't, I was prepared to compromise.

Were there any things about women's dresses that you couldn't conform to like corsets or something that you felt was physically bad for you?

I don't think so.

Because that's what's said about women's liberation as a joke that we've burnt our bras.

Yes I know. Well, I always feel (I'm not taking Women's Liberation only) that the dress of young people today is symbolic of their revolt against all things that are conventional and why should they. They're revolting against the church, and the women against continual serfdom (if you like to put that in inverted commas) and it takes some of this attitude I think. Something I was going to tell you about this dress business. I think all these stupid things that are said about women's lib. burning their bras is just silly nonsense that used to be said about us. They used to say other stupid things, tell us to go home. I remember one meeting I was at with another speaker, a man called out from the crowd "How would you like to go into a quarry and quarry stone. You know quite well you wouldn't do it." And she said "Look, how would you like to go home and go to bed and have twins?" The women used to be very good at repartee, very clever.

Do you think they felt a distance from other women? You said that there's always a chance that if you're a rebel you become very self-conscious about it and you get very distanced from other people.

Yes, I think one did feel very alone, always. One didn't mind being alone. But one did . . . much more in the war than even in the suffrage days and then of course, in Africa.

On the other hand, some people writing about the women's movement said it was their first experience of community life. Did you feel that?

No, I think what we felt more was – get on with the job. I don't know whether anything else concerned us really.

Did you spend less time on processions and displays than the WSPU?

Much more than you today, but yes, we did. Except for that Great March, I don't think we did very much demonstration, we concentrated far more on organising in areas. We didn't have a uniform, we had special colours, red and green and white . . . of course, a banner, but we concentrated far more on getting to know people, interesting people, getting them to join a group, holding meetings, penetrating into existing organisations. And that was cheaper because they paid for the hall and all the expenses. I used to think debates were very valuable. I wrote a little play once, a sort of mock-trial of women. That was published and used a great deal where we tried the suffrage movement. It was called Women on Trial, I think, I had an example of every branch of the work of the movement – a working woman in the dock being questioned as to how much money her husband earned and what did she have of it and so on, and then the woman who paid rates and all the expense and hadn't got the vote; the woman who was interested in the child and home and had no say in any laws that affected the home and child. I gave them names, and it was very successful, ramming home points in that way. So we did much more of that quiet spadework and although the violence did bring things out, I think the militants did benefit from all the hard work that we'd done quietly.

“conditioning goes deeper than I cared to imagine”

Gillian Lacey describes the experience of two fallopian pregnancies

Both pregnancies I've had were ectopic, that is they were in the fallopian tube and not in the uterus. This happens when the fertilised egg can't get down the tube because the tube is blocked or damaged. The egg is forced to grow in the tube, which cannot expand very much and which eventually bursts. This is quite dangerous and requires immediate treatment. Sometimes ectopic pregnancies abort themselves. Unfortunately it is a very difficult state to diagnose before the rupture happens as the symptoms may be symptoms of many other things. Early symptoms may be like those of a normal pregnancy, since all the same hormonal changes take place; or there might be none of these at all. You may or may not miss a period, pregnancy tests may or may not show positive, there may or may not be slight bleeding and pains in the lower abdomen, probably localised on the side of the pregnancy. The most unmistakable sign is severe cramping pains which occur just before the rupture (just before can mean a day or two rather than a few minutes). An operation is always necessary once it's fairly sure you've got an ectopic.

The most common cause of ectopic is from salpingitis (inflammation of the tubes). This causes the tube to be wholly or partially closed with scar tissue. Gonorrhea accounts for most of these infections. Ectopics can also be caused by damage during some other operation, by TB, or, as in my case, by something inexplicable.

Only about a third of women who have had an ectopic have a child afterwards. If one tube has been infected the chances are that the other is too. So once you've had one ectopic pregnancy your chances of having another are slightly increased.

I had never heard of ectopic pregnancy, so the first time I had one I was totally ignorant of what was going on. I was 28 and hadn't been pregnant before. It took a couple of weeks of feeling ill and seeing doctors before I was finally admitted to hospital for tests and ended up having an emergency operation. Having an anaesthetic has always been one of my worst hangups – a fear of being asleep, unconscious or dead. Now I had to face it. I was terrified and the pre-med didn't even make me feel drowsy. The journey to the theatre was really nightmarish and all I could think of was jumping off the trolley, yet I knew that would solve nothing. I had to face the needle... I'll describe the second time in more detail as it was a more conscious



'The essential woman' from 'Not in Gods Image' Maurice Temple Smith.

and recent experience.

After having the first ruptured tube removed I assumed that my chances of getting pregnant were halved, so that if I counted the days carefully I wouldn't get pregnant and needn't use contraceptives. I think now this was an attempt to try and have a child without admitting to myself that I wanted one. I certainly didn't know the risk I was taking. I began to suspect it when two years later I wasn't pregnant after miscalculating rather too often. I guessed that the remaining tube was blocked again, and that if I didn't use contraceptives and an egg got fertilised it would develop in the tube like last time. I meant to go and ask a doctor but I put it off until it was too late...

... I started to feel sick when I drank coffee. People joked that I must be pregnant. I checked dates and found that my period was already a week late. My breasts were sore and enlarged, more and more things made me feel sick, I felt extremely tired all the time. From the way I felt I was sure it would be ectopic again. In my

ignorance I hoped that early diagnosis would be possible and the whole thing could be magically dissolved away without another operation. All I learnt was that it is very difficult to diagnose until you're on the operating table having exploratory surgery. My own doctor said she had never heard of two consecutive ectopics.

Two weeks after my period was due slight brownish bleeding started. My belly felt heavy, blown up, and very uncomfortable, but this time I had no real pain. I got more and more depressed and withdrawn in this state of not knowing, which lasted about three weeks. When I'd been bleeding for about four days I went to the doctor again and asked if I could go to Charing Cross hospital for tests. Because of my history she arranged for me to be admitted that day. The fourth urine test was positive. It was at last established that I was pregnant but since I had no real pain there was nothing to do but go home and wait... it might be a cyst, an ectopic, a threatened abortion, or a normal pregnancy. If the pain got severe I was to go back immediately. It was good to meet a doctor who would admit that they didn't know and that on the whole there was very little doctors know. It was also frightening having a myth of the doctor knows everything exploded over my own body.

The friends I stayed with were very supportive. I lay there in a state of real fear, unable to eat. After three days the pain I was expecting came. There was no mistaking it. My stomach just cramped up. We rushed down to the hospital and they operated at one in the morning. This time I tried to get things clear. I said if the tube wasn't already ruptured, I wanted it out anyway; I didn't want it cleared again. They said was I sure, I said YES. So they agreed. It wasn't ruptured so I'm glad I made the point or I might have been left with a damaged tube, always having to use contraceptives and living in terror in case they failed.

Before the operation I was lying there shaking and feeling a real coward. The assistant anaesthetist came in and explained a lot of things I wanted to know about anaesthetic. Ironically instead of getting a really powerful pre-med I got none at all. As it was the middle of the night and this was the only operation being done, things were a bit less formal. Normally on operation day you're just trundled out and back one after the other for mending. The friendly anaesthetist walked round to the theatre with me, holding my hand and the drip and chatting.

(It would be good if they'd let a friend go with you to the theatre). I discovered they often fix a drip beforehand, so that if you later lose a lot of blood and need a blood transfusion, the saline solution bottle can be exchanged for blood and the needle is already in the vein – it is sometimes difficult to insert the needle into a vein if you've lost a lot of blood.

I had the same kind of anaesthetic as before but this time I went off into a pleasant dreamy doze. It felt very different from the previous time and since I'd been so scared I can only explain it in terms of the particular situation – time of day, familiarity with one or two faces, the fact that I'd had a chance to speak a few times to the surgeon beforehand, and therefore developed a bit of trust and knew more of the procedure. I feel I was lucky to meet doctors who were quite co-operative and prepared to spend a bit of time answering questions.

When I came round I thought at first I hadn't been anywhere. Then I felt the pain in my belly and saw the drip still in my arm and felt relieved that the operation was over. The pain was far less severe than the previous time, when the anaesthetic had made me very sick, and when starting to eat again had caused me hours of agony as my intestines tried to settle down. I drank a little very often and didn't try to eat for nearly three days. I wasn't sick at all and didn't need to accept pain killers every time they were offered. Soon I started getting the horrors about the things that can go wrong after operations. There was nothing I could do about having lost two tubes and two kids, so my depression skidded off into a general manic fear of blood, illness and death, feeling my body just running down.

I didn't start bleeding till four days after the

operation. Then there was more blood than I'm used to and a lot of small clots. I got more scared and pestered the consultant for an explanation of exactly what was going on. Because I was no longer pregnant, the capillaries that had been supplying blood closed off their supply unevenly, and the lining of the uterus – which had built up for longer and was therefore thicker than usual – was shed in an irregular way. There is an enzyme in the blood called fibrinolysin which normally breaks down clots: if more than the normal amount of blood is shed there is sometimes not enough fibrinolysin to break down all the clots. This bleeding lasted eight days though it seemed endless to me. I left the hospital eight days after the operation and started making love a couple of weeks later, but like the time before I soon developed a constant series of infections which have been very difficult to get rid of.

When I was in Charing Cross I met a few doctors who were beginning to talk to patients as if they were people and not some lower order. They admitted when they didn't know, and spent more than the usual few seconds trying to answer questions put to them by patients. I don't want to make it sound that things are all solved there – far from it – but it certainly seemed much better than experiences other people have had in hospitals.

Feelings as a result of now being sterile

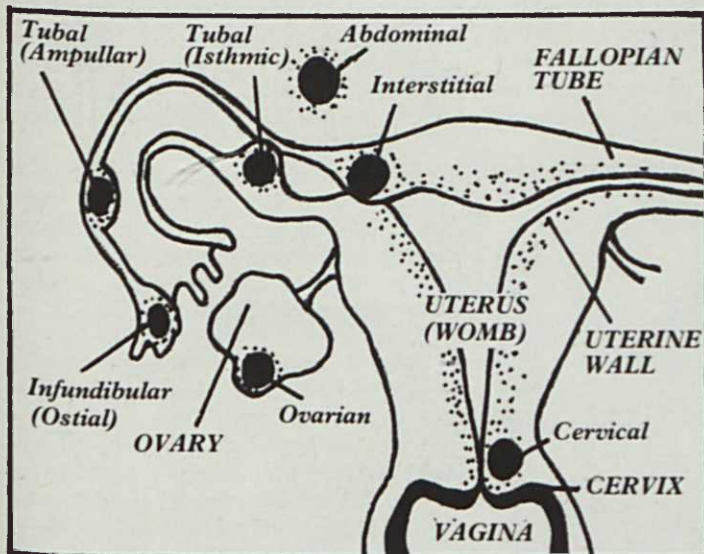
Until I was 27 I didn't want kids anyway. Then I decided I would quite like one, but it wasn't a desperate desire. I started having tests to see why I didn't get pregnant. Since then I've accepted fairly easily my body's reluctance to reproduce without a lot of bother, and fear of physical illness has overridden my feelings of wanting a child. I didn't want one so much that

I would continue risking my own body to get one.

I was depressed for months after the first operation and put it down to the fact of my marriage breaking up. This time there was nothing traumatic like that as I have a very loving and supportive relationship with the man who would have been the child's father.

My determination not to mind seemed to make me centre my depression on any subject but that of not being able to have kids. For some months I felt paranoid about friendships, and my inability to contribute in work situations where friends were involved. Things that normally worry me occasionally now became real struggles. I couldn't talk too much about them because the people I felt closest to were also the ones I was most scared of. Where many women would have said, in a straightforward way, 'I feel I am no longer a whole woman' – because they could no longer reproduce – I have been saying this in a more generalised, obscure way, by thinking I was not good at things I was doing, or that I was no good as a friend because 'something was missing'.

My reaction has been to act in turn withdrawn and aggressive in attempts to defend myself. It's all much more involved than this description, but that's the basis of what I feel. It's taken a long while to work it out and it only became clear when a man asked me what I felt about not being able to have kids. All the other people who have asked me I've known better than this man, and my defences were prepared for them. In this case I wasn't ready. I felt slightly uneasy. Deep down, and I really hate admitting it, I felt a fear of being sexually rejected because I am no longer able to reproduce. Conditioning goes deeper than I cared to imagine. ■



A fertilised egg normally implants in the uterine wall and grows in the uterus. The black dots in this diagram of the reproductive system represent possible sites of an ectopic pregnancy.

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What Katy Didn't Do

Camilla Nightingale looks at why children's books are a source of frustration and confusion for girls, narrowing their horizons and suppressing their spirit of adventure.



It was rather a queer book for a little girl to take a fancy to.
(Susan Coolidge *What Katy Did* illus. by Margery Gill)

Many liberal minded teachers, librarians and writers readily accept that children's books reflect a one-sided view of life, that of the well-to-do middle classes where children are well educated and play out their adventures against a background of parental understanding and concern. Yet these same people are blind to the fact that there is another large section of child readers who soon realise that the significant world, that is where people do exciting things and influence events does not include them. Girls find that there are very few books where they play a crucial and satisfying part.

Small girls are no different from small boys. They like to get dirty, play rough games, climb trees, scrap, run, jump and swim, and they like to read satisfying stories about kids like themselves having adventures. Adventures can either be of a fantastical kind, or simply about children getting deeply involved in a new experience. The child's involvement and positive action are really more important than the scale of the adventure. The plot could be a trip to Jupiter or a quarrel with the people next door. Whatever the adventure, children can identify

totally, and extend their own experience into the realms of their choice.

Choice for girls is limited. Children's books comprise boys' books, girls' books, and books supposedly meant for both sexes, but the latter I suspect, are largely read by girls. Both boys' books and girls' books emphasise the polarity of the sexes, but boys' books at least satisfy children's need for adventure, while books for girls tend to suppress it. Many women I know remember the hunt for suitable heroines to identify with. We longed for books about women pilots, women divers, women explorers, climbers and space travellers, or even about girls who were unrepentantly naughty and rebellious. It wasn't just that we couldn't identify with boys in stories, we just wanted to be reassured that we were not to be excluded from the world of action. We ended up reading *Biggles* and *William*, and like other girls, we soon got the message that the people who have the adventures and scope to determine the course of their own lives, are men.

In exactly the same way that the working class child absorbs a lesson about his place in society from his reading, the girl reader learns lessons about the role she will play as a woman. Before they reach their teens, many girls rebel against the feminine role they see ahead of them. (I am talking from my own experience and from that of numerous friends.) They see no evidence in play or at school that they are less equipped for an exciting and active life than boys. Some are as strong physically and many are at that stage more advanced at school, and yet they are learning all the time that a woman's role is to be an adjunct to a man's life.

Stories for girls show no sympathy with the conflict between the developing awareness of self and the experience of the female role which goes on in many younger girls. Girls and boys in books behave in ways which are stereotyped according to adult concepts of male and female behaviour. Sex roles are rigidly emphasised, denying a child's feeling that she is a person in her own right, independent of sex.



Then Katy would send for every recipe book in the house

Problems like spots and glasses

The worst offenders in role preparation are books exclusively for boys or girls. Both stress the polarity of the sexes and exaggerate the sexual stereotypes. Girls books are, however, more inhibiting to the development of the child's imagination than are books meant for boys. Boys' adventures take place in all-male societies of motor racing circuits, the services, cargo boats. The selection I looked at were about smuggling, rallying, motor racing and

trapping. The stories roved all over Europe, America, Northern Canada, and the China Seas. Extraordinary feats of physical endurance and skill were involved and the resources of the hero were stretched to the limit. One thing common to them all was the hero's high degree of technical competence in his particular field – the technicalities of motor cars, explosives or traps were all described in detail, and the adventures, though hair-raising enough to be satisfying, were based on a firm grasp of real life.

Books, especially for girls are set in predominantly female societies like schools, pony clubs, ballet school, and among secretaries, nurses or air hostesses. Adventures are reduced to a kind of social extravaganza. In a school setting this could be the achievement of Anglea Brazil's "Sunshine of popularity," by the proper exercise of feminine qualities. In the more sophisticated stories for older girls the aims are social success in the adult world and the capture of the inevitable husband. Lorna Hill has written a whole string of books about different girls at Sadlers Wells. Dance, however, plays a minor part in the stories, which are concerned with the social lives of the characters. There are illustrations of the girls doing various ballet steps, but no real sense is given of the rigorous life a dancer leads, and the technical detail, so emphasised in boys' books is studiously avoided. The difficulties are entirely in adapting to the rarefied world of balletomanes. Other "girls only" books describe the girls overcoming their desires for adventure and feelings of rebellion (described as their capriciousness and wilfulness) and transforming them into acceptable feminine qualities like inner strength and imagination. Remember Jo in *Little Women*, and Katy of *What Katy Did*. Another common plot tells how the girl heroine overcomes the motiveless malice of another girl. These female lags appear surprisingly frequently, and encourage the belief subscribed to by women themselves, that there is a suspect quality in all women.

Current booklists promoted by publishers as "for girls" show a preponderance of books about love, dating and romance, with a sideline in problems, like spots, glasses and so on, which interfere with romance. Dating is a teenage and subteenage pre-occupation, and should be considered in children's books, and so should the physical problems which manifest themselves in the teens. However the implication in these books is that romance is the purpose of a girl's life, and problems exist insofar as they hinder romance. Boys are interested in dating too, but they are not expected to read books about it. It is a minor part of their lives. Girls are not allowed the comforting assumption that sex and dating need play only a part in their lives. They read that it is of crucial importance, and learn to think about very little else. Dating literature is habit forming – I remember from my own teens reading quantities of the stuff to find the recipe for finding a man.

Dental Assistant but never the dentist

Career books absolutely reinforce the traditional and out of date ideas about woman's capabilities. Bodley Head concede that girls can be air hostesses, beauticians, fashion buyers, journalists, farmers, library assistants, models, policewomen, teachers, almoners, booksellers, dental assistants and therapists. They may play a part in the processes of publishing, television, advertising and broad-



Jo played male parts to her hearts content (Louisa May Alcott *Little Women* ill. by S. Van Abbe)

casting. Other publishers have similar lists. Why are there women almoners, nurses and therapists in hospitals, but no doctors? Why is Sheila a dental assistant and not a dentist, when these jobs are done by many women. Juliet in *Publishing* turned out to be secretary to a publisher, and left to get married. Joan on the farm became a herdsman, and left to get married. Jane, young authoress and failed doctor, did not succeed in getting anything published. The following quotations are typical:-

"A girl confident that with A certificate typing, her ugly mug would not impede her career." - *Juliet in Publishing*.

Daddy: "I know it's a bit of a bore, but shorthand typing never comes amiss" - and later

Julian: "I think it would be silly for you to give up this job of yours. Obviously you like it. It's going to get you out and about all over the world and teach you to stand confidently on your own two feet. But maybe in say four years time you might feel that you've got all you can get out of being a ship's officer and that a home of your own might be a good idea?" - *Hester, Ship's Officer*.

Broadly speaking, books for boys extend the child's desire for adventure and involve him closely with the technical aspects of the development of the plot. Girls' books minimise adventure to social play acting and skate over the technicalities of adult life, clouding them in

romance. I think that the great popularity of the school story must lie in the fact that the girl heroine is allowed considerable scope for adventure and rebellion against authority. There are no men present, indeed within the terms of reference of the story, men hardly exist, except in the very menial capacity of gardeners and grooms. There is no need therefore to inhibit the girls to maintain a standard of femininity. Even in school stories however, the girl does not rebel for the sake of rebelling, or because she questions the authority imposed upon her. It is always revealed that she was acting to uphold the honour of the school.

The solution is to fall in love

A book which combines most of the topics of "special interest to girls" is *Portrait of Margarita* by Ruth M. Arthur, Gollancz, 1968. This book purports to tackle the colour problem. Margarita, a young coloured girl, is living at boarding school when she is given the news that her parents have been killed, and she is sent to live in a village in the country. John, her guardian, is a brilliant, handsome, enigmatic lawyer, and Margarita falls in love with him. Anonymous notes warn her to leave the village and threaten her life. At first Margarita assumes that the villagers will not tolerate a coloured girl in their midst, but it turns out that the writer of the notes is an old woman who nursed John. Finally the old lady tries to kill Margarita, but herself falls victim to her own trap. John takes Margarita abroad to solve her problems, and she falls in love with a young fisherman, who is really a student of architecture with a brilliant future.

At the beginning of the book, Margarita has real problems. She has to adjust to the fact of her parents death and adapt herself to life without them, and she has to establish her relationship, as a coloured girl, with her new surroundings. The solution she finds to both problems is to "fall in love" with John, who is conveniently available as father figure, comfort and male ideal. The facts of the case may be psychologically realistic, but the writer does not show any attempt to come to terms with Margarita's problems on a realistic level. Her feelings about her parents' death are only mentioned twice, and her other problems are glossed over. Margarita makes no attempt to come to terms with her problems herself, her big decisions are made by John. Her second love affair is both a new way to evade present problems and a solution to those of the future. This (second love) affair is horrifying in itself in that this child who has not yet even finished school, with almost no experience of life, is willing to see her future finalised in the form of this young prince/fisherman with a fat bank balance in his glass slipper. The final objection is to the old nanny, who is sharply contrasted to lucky Margarita as the old woman who never found love, and who went mad when her only love object was threatened.

Girls are a liability in a group adventure

Books especially for one sex blatantly reinforce traditional ideas about sex roles, but there is another group of books, which purports to be for both girls and boys, which is perhaps more pernicious. This is the family or group adventure story. These books represent a supposedly balanced view of reality, which the single sex books manifestly do not, but all this means sexual role playing is more subtle. Girls often play a crucial part in the adventure, but the

leader and final decision maker is always a boy. The male and female roles are invariably stereotyped when it comes to physical prowess. Boys and girls of similar ages vary a great deal in physical accomplishment, but it is always the girl who jeopardises the safety of the gang by falling over a tree root, or by her strength giving out halfway up a rope. And it is always a boy, not another girl who comes back and rescues her. Emotionally, too, girls are a liability in a group adventure. They may, like Anne in the *Famous Five*, be crybabies who need constant encouragement from the others, or their impulsiveness may thwart the plans of the boy leader, or their extra sensitivity may allow them to sympathise with the other side too much. In all cases, girls become an extra hazard, an old man of the sea for the boys to deal with.

Good gracious it's those potty girls again,' groaned the boy 'Can't you leave me alone? you talked a lot of rubbish yesterday and now you're talking it again.'
(Enid Blyton *Five on a Secret Trail*)

Even the best imaginative adventure stories maintain the traditional roles. In *The Shield Ring* by Rosemary Sutcliffe, the central character is a girl, Frytha, but through her we feel the experiences of a boy, Bjorn. Bjorn is always active, carving, making toy boats, while Frytha lies in the grass, watching. He is the talented one, a brave fighter and a gifted musician. The battle sequences are experienced by Bjorn, but made available to the reader through Frytha. Both children are refugees in the Viking camp, but while Frytha settles into her woman's round of duties, Bjorn maintains his apartness and separate identity, finally taking Frytha away to make a new life on his terms. In all things Frytha passively follows Bjorn, but as she follows him into some really good adventures it is one of the more satisfying books for girls to read. In the last analysis, unfortunately, it maintains a traditional attitude to women.

From the *Mixed up Files of Mrs. Basil Frankweiler* is the story of a brother and sister who run away from home in a New York suburb, and go to live in the Metropolitan Museum. It is the girl's idea to run away and initially she organises the escapade, manipulating her little brother into accompanying her. Once the boy gets enthusiastic about the adventure, he takes over most of the organisation. His sister cannot handle their modest sum of money. She wants to spend it on non-essentials like the laundromat, going to restaurants with waiters and travelling in taxis. In short, her adventure is still in the realms of fantasy and it takes a boy to make it work practically. She is also upset by the fustiness of the four-poster bed they sleep in and insists that they take baths in the fountain in the museum. Once the boy has become concerned to make the escapade work, he determines a plan of action and insists they keep to it, while the girl is distracted by events as they arise. They behave in what are considered to be typically male and female ways.

In *The Hidden Road* by Leila Berg, Jeremy and Nicola, two oppressively middle-class children, move to a new house in a secluded road, which represents paradise for both of them. The council move in with bulldozers and build council flats right next door. The whole family is shocked that their road could be violated. Nicola is especially affected as the privacy and exclusiveness of the road are iden-

tified with her own developing feelings of awareness about herself. Working-class and middle-class finally come together in a fight to bring a man to justice who crushed a child's trike with his car and prejudices on both sides are demolished. Sex roles are rigidly adhered to on all levels. Nicola responds to the newcomers emotionally and from an entirely selfish point of view. Jeremy is sensible and acknowledges that people have to live somewhere. Nicola has great difficulty in coming to terms with the new people during the course of their action together. She sees them as noisy and crude and even assumes that working-class mothers don't know how to care for their children. It is Nicola's female emotionalism and self-orientated approach which makes her behave in this way. Her brother's responses are rational. The adults who appear are old fashioned by any standards. The working-class flat is always full of the smell of home baking, and the middle-class mum, when not baking herself spends the afternoons sorting through the sheets for possible holes, then prevails upon Nicola to help her fold them and put them back. Both mothers are cuddly secure figures, and fathers appear briefly to dispense wisdom and get things organised.

A stereotype has already emerged from the last two examples mentioned: that of the girl who reacts in an emotional and impulsive way, and who is restrained by the common sense of her little brother.

Media image of happy families

The books I have described above, which were chosen completely at random, maintain established sexual roles rather than reinforcing them. Career books and one sex only books operate a harder sell, providing girls with an image of their future lives, which reflects the general media image of happy families seen in the commercials. Mother is happily engaged in keeping the home spic and span, father appears in the evening, smoking his pipe, and the kids are clean and charming, if a bit boisterous. We all recognise the falseness of the world of commercials, because we know that they are trying to put one over on us, to sell us something. Books of fiction should have no interest in selling an image, but the media world is immediately recognisable in teenage romances and other books. Marriage and family life is an area in which there are no problems. The problems in the story are about getting married, and looking right in order to get married. The popularity of the dreamworld of *Valentine*, *Jackie* and *Maralyn* has been recognised by the publishers. Saleability is the prime motive. The good imaginative books, on the other hand, combine a genuine reflection of what the writer sees as the actual situation, with a shrewd idea of what will sell.

Some writers may wish to make their girl characters more positive, departing from the formula slightly, but feel that this would alienate their possible boy readers, as girls will tolerate a boy hero, but few boys would want to read about girls having adventures. The conclusion I would draw from this is that the male role, like the female role, is a source of doubt and insecurity to kids, who cannot take a flexible attitude. Children are going through a difficult period of adjustment to sexual roles, and books should be a positive source of help.

Most writers of books read by girls are women, who are writing about society as they experience it and as they think their readers want to see it. Many of them may have rebelled

against their femininity when children, but must have come to some sort of terms with it in adult life in order to survive. Feelings of rebellion, once dispatched, are seen as undesirable, and the writer's work reflects her successful coming to terms with her problems.

An interesting concession to young girls' rebellion is the tomboy. She appears in the younger age range, when little girls are still unsure about accepting female status, and do many of the same things that little boys do, like playing rough games and climbing trees. Tomboys are allowed to play a prominent part in an adventure, even to take over the leadership for part of the time, to be tough, resourceful and to make decisions. They also openly attack the female role that outside people like parents and relations expect them to play. George, in the *Famous Five* is openly scornful of the idea that girls are in any way weaker than boys. Nancy in *Swallows and Amazons* fiercely defends a girl's ability and right to do anything a boy can do. Unfortunately the tomboy's scorn for the trappings of femininity extends to girls themselves. George treats Anne in exactly the same way that the boys do, patronising her weakness, and kindly looking after her. Anne maintains the feminine ideal, while George is considered as a boy. Peggy and Susan in *Swallows and Amazons* spend their time in the galley being good girls, allowing Captain Nancy to have her aberrations. The tomboy seems to be a kind of safety valve for girls who are unsure of their role. She allows free reign to their fantasies of adventure, but at the same time she is sternly contrasted with the real girls. She is allowed no concessions to femaleness, dressing,



He evidently thought George was a boy, and she did look rather like one - she was wearing shorts and jersey, as usual, and her curly hair was very short. Nobody said that George wasn't a boy. Certainly George was not going to!

(Enid Blyton *Five go to Smugglers Top* illus. by Eileen Soper)

acting and looking like a boy, and while she herself will not accept the fact she is a girl, she is not totally accepted by the boys. Her world is ultimately unsatisfactory. Perhaps it is better after all to be a real girl.

It is interesting to note that the roles are never reversed the other way. Arthur Ransome never puts John and Roger in the galley.

It will be argued that many of the books I cri-

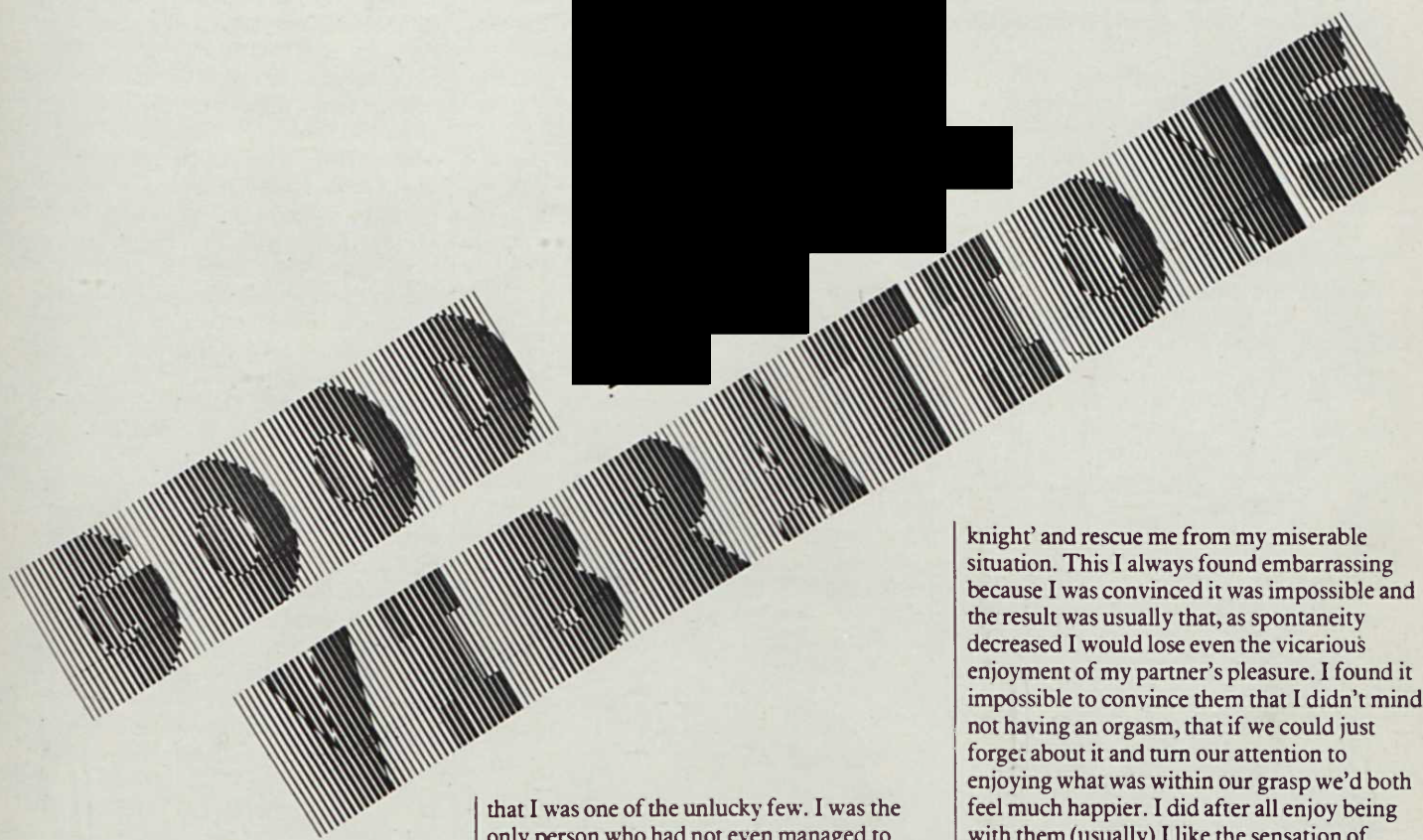
ticize merely represent society as it is. This is true. But I am writing from a point of view which is critical of the way society is, particularly in its attitude to women. While it is representative and safe to write books showing women in traditional passive roles, books of this sort give no encouragement to girls who have not yet totally accepted second-class citizenship. One of the many reasons that girls accept their passive secondary sex role is because they are not exposed to the idea that they can be anything else. Though it is unrepresentative to write a book called *Jill, Test Pilot*. Jill will never think of becoming a test pilot until somebody writes such a book. In the same way that the working-class child learns from his reading that the world of significant people is made up from the middle classes, so the girl sees that the significant people are men. The working-class boy may be spurred on to reject his class and rise in the world, but no girl can aspire to change her sex.

Difficult to escape the idea of a sell

It is not feasible or desirable to ask that children's fiction be in the vanguard of revolutionary change in society's attitudes to sexual stereotyping. It is a far too sensitive area to start pushing propaganda - but this is exactly what we have been doing so far, pushing the idea of female subordination through children's stories, to the confusion of little girls who are trying to come to terms with roles for which they see themselves destined, but for which they feel themselves unsuited. Nobody wants to replace dominant men in literature with dominant women. That would simply be substituting one stereotype for another. We simply want to see books where boys and girls behave as people, not according to preset patterns, which have no relevance to the way children feel when they read the book. The concepts of male and female behaviour are adult ones and are sources of insecurity to all children, and frustration to girls as the female role is more restricting.

I think a change of attitudes in kids' stories will only follow a change in attitudes in society, unless we start writing books. One thing that can be done however, and is being done by a small W.L. group centered in Leeds, is to compile lists of kids' books which do not stick to the adult patterns and which show kids as people. They are not necessarily recently written books, or books written in a modern context. In fact older fiction escaped the media image of woman, and often makes an honest attempt to deal with the problems faced by girls. Outside Georgette Heyer, people in historical settings do not have to behave in prescribed ways any more than they do today. Joan Aiken's *Dido Twite*, Helen Cresswell's *Gravella Roller* and Rosemary Sutcliffe's *Kings Daughter* exist at different times in the past and are in no way restricted by being female. The word has no significance for them except as a physical description. Characters in adult fiction are not necessarily restricted by sex. It is something which seems prevalent in children's stories, and it is difficult to escape the idea of a sell. The way out must be to create an awareness that kids in stories are nearly always stereotyped according to sex, but to point out that this need not necessarily be so, by using illustrations from authors who have consciously or unconsciously avoided the trap. ■

Camilla Nightingale is a member of the Women's Liberation Literature Collective.



by **Alison Machin**

Vaginal or clitoral, the great debate on the nature of the orgasm had always left me cold. I had never had one and would have been extremely grateful if the sensation had arisen from my elbow, if it would only come from somewhere. For years it was my big dark secret. I faked with men and kept my mouth shut when the subject came up with women. My heart would sink when I heard feminists affirming that if a woman doesn't have an orgasm it is the man's fault. I knew in my case this was certainly not true. I remember the first time the subject came up at a woman's group meeting. I said very little but was extremely relieved to discover that most women didn't expect to experience orgasm every time and many had not experienced it at all until they were involved in long standing, stable relationships. I was only 23 with a series of very short lived affairs behind me, there was hope for me yet. I continued to enjoy sex without expecting a great deal from it, and as before, my relationships with men were superficial and brief.

The next time the subject came up I managed to admit my shameful secret. The looks of shocked sympathy confirmed my suspicions

that I was one of the unlucky few. I was the only person who had not even managed to achieve the desired goal by masturbating - I had tried a few times but without conviction or success - feelings of inadequacy began to creep in. I might look quite promising from the outside but there was definitely something missing. What I lacked in real feelings I began to make up for in performance. I became so hung up with making my partner enjoy it that I was alienating myself from the act entirely. Unconsciously I began to resist getting involved with men on any but the most superficial level. I couldn't bear the thought of getting really involved with someone so that I would have to give up faking and, worst of all, really face up to the possibility of a less than satisfactory sex life stretching ahead of me for years. One night stands became the norm. The excitement of a new encounter was enough in itself. I didn't have to make anything of the fragmented sensations I felt, very little was expected of me and usually my partners excitement would carry me along.

Men were divided in my mind into those who I regarded almost totally as sex objects and with a certain amount of contempt and friends who I didn't sleep with for fear of spoiling things. The reason for this division was that a friend would care enough about me to try and ensure that I enjoyed sex with him and I would probably be forced to admit my problem. If I did, one of two things would happen. Either they would stop trying and satisfy only their own needs which left me feeling extremely frustrated or they would decide to be 'the white

knight' and rescue me from my miserable situation. This I always found embarrassing because I was convinced it was impossible and the result was usually that, as spontaneity decreased I would lose even the vicarious enjoyment of my partner's pleasure. I found it impossible to convince them that I didn't mind not having an orgasm, that if we could just forget about it and turn our attention to enjoying what was within our grasp we'd both feel much happier. I did after all enjoy being with them (usually) I like the sensation of another body close to mine, I enjoy being caressed and I like fucking. I wasn't looking for the moon and stars and I didn't expect the earth to move beneath me.

I had some idea what these men must be feeling. I had slept with a couple of men who didn't always have orgasms and I'd found it profoundly disturbing. It always seemed to be a reflection on me - after all I couldn't be good enough at it if I couldn't make them enjoy it. Sleeping with a man I liked meant dealing not only with his guilt at not satisfying me but also my guilt at not satisfying him. The result was that I cut myself off from real relationships with men and surrounded myself with female friends who I loved and trusted but didn't feel attracted to. I 'hived off' the sexual side of my personality. If I felt randy and I met a man I fancied, I would 'home in' with total concentration and more often than not take him home with me for immediate consumption. I certainly didn't think of waiting until I got to know him better. Then he would have become a friend and the spontaneity would be lost. Most men didn't hang around for repeat performances - I didn't treat them very well - but some got some kind of masochistic kick out of it and stayed a little longer. The part of my personality which craved love and affection welcomed them but then the facade would crumble. I simply could not sustain the role of the tough sexy woman and the split between my confident, arrogant outside appearance and the confused and ►

frightened person inside me simply couldn't come together. I would become confused and miserable, trapped inside the barricades of my own defences and unable to identify the real me. Was I this confused bitter bitch that he turned me into or the reasonably confident clear headed person I used to be? I began to hate the men who brought out the dark recesses of my personality. I blamed them for everything that happened and drove them away. For a few months I would lick my wounds, ask myself why yet again I had failed and shore up my defences with the help of loving and supportive friends. Before long the urge would rise up again and I'd start looking for a new victim.

The pattern repeated itself too often and I began to understand what was happening to me. I realised that my inability to achieve orgasm was becoming a major issue in my life

and that I had to confront the problem and try to resolve it some way. I knew now that everything would not suddenly 'come right' in a cloudburst of romance in bed with some guy. My anxiety would certainly prevent it happening outside a totally trusting relationship which I simply couldn't imagine achieving with a man. I occasionally toyed with the idea that I might be gay as I certainly preferred the company of women but I knew that really my sexuality was directed towards men no matter how much I might distrust them. I began to talk more openly about the matter with friends. Most men had been pretty unhelpful because there seemed to be no way of getting over the ego problem - on both sides. Some 'straight' women were sympathetic but as they had only their own experience to draw on it was often difficult for them to understand. Some of them made me feel a lot worse by either being incredulous or so sympathetic that I began to think that I had some rare and incurable disease. The women who gave me the most help were two gay friends who were able to discuss the matter with total frankness drawn from the experience not only of their own bodies and functioning but of other women as well. They were the only people who really understood how much sexuality varies, from one woman to another and more than anyone else, they saw orgasm as a part of, rather than the total aim of sex, certainly to be achieved if possible but not at the expense of emotional involvement and more generalised sensual experience. The advice they gave me was, to masturbate, if necessary with the help of a vibrator. They were quite sure that a vibrator couldn't fail to work.

I didn't go straight out and buy one. I was too embarrassed to go into a sex shop and anyway I was still afraid of failing. If the vibrator

didn't work, my last hope of salvation would be ruled out. I wanted at least to hold onto a ray of hope.

Not long after this, something happened which forced me to think about my situation. I was getting drawn into a relationship with a man who I had been attracted to for a long time. Circumstances had made it possible for me to get to know him quite well because I had never thought our relationship could develop sexually. When I realised that there was a real possibility of deeper involvement with him, I panicked and tried to run away from it. I knew I couldn't live up to his expectations of me nor could I provide him with an alternative to the relationship he was already involved in. I didn't want to take responsibility for what was happening and I was very much afraid that his ego and therefore our relationship would suffer if I slept with him. I cared about him too much to spoil things but I knew I couldn't stop it happening - I was already committed.

In a fit of rather panicky depression I brought up the orgasm problem with a friend. This time I got advice which was not only encouraging but practical. She knew another woman who didn't have orgasms and she obviously didn't think I was a freak. She not only suggested a vibrator but provided me with one, delivered at midnight in a plain brown wrapper with a list of rather 'tongue in cheek' instructions, which I certainly didn't need. I went to bed, firmly shut the door and had a look at this object which was supposed to work such miracles. It was black and ugly with chrome trim but I decided to give it a try.

Luckily I was feeling reasonably optimistic that evening and I told myself that: nobody was listening; nobody knew; and nobody was awaiting results. If I failed I'd try again some time. Then I lay back, turned it on and tentatively searched out the most sensitive area. (I'd read Masters and Johnson so I knew where to look). Once I'd started, instinct took over pretty fast. I began to experience sensation which I recognised from previous attempts at masturbating. They were uncomfortable, almost painful and I'd always stopped when they started. This time I didn't stop and sure enough my body was jerked with a series of frighteningly vigorous contractions. I was really rather shocked but there was definitely no mistaking the sensation. I'd had an orgasm at last.

The first time I got laid I had only the man concerned to celebrate with and he was singularly unimpressed, thinking probably that he was the one who deserved

congratulations for finally wearing down my defences. This time congratulations were enthusiastic and friendly. I arrived at my friends flat that evening after reporting my success and was greeted by four women with broad grins and a bottle of wine. For the next week I was addicted to the vibrator. I had found the answer and it was nothing to do with love or being turned on, it was purely a physical reaction which depended on certain emotional preconditions. I had to feel relaxed, totally safe from any kind of interruption or intrusion and I had to concentrate.

Looking back I realise that I had developed some kind of emotional stalling mechanism. As I came near to orgasm my muscles would tense and actually resist. The sensations would become almost unbearable, this was why I had always stopped. With the vibrator I soon learnt what was happening and the resistance disappeared. Now that unpleasant feeling only comes back when I am feeling tense or trying to hurry. I had previously expected everything to happen very quickly and had given up when it didn't, patience is pretty vital if you are learning anything, and orgasm can be learned. Concentration is very important for me. One friend of mine passed her law exams by masturbating while she studied. Personally I can't imagine how she did it but, as I said before, we are all different.

I haven't learnt yet to relax enough to have orgasms through fucking or manipulation by another person however much I care about him. I haven't learnt to deal with the ego problem either. But much of my anxiety about sex has dropped away and I am enjoying it more than I have done for ages because I can now enjoy the sensuality, knowing that I am capable of having an orgasm myself if need be. I may not manage to have an orgasm with another person for years but I feel fairly confident that what I have learned to do in the privacy of my own bed I will eventually be able to do with someone I love and trust. Now I've got a reason to look for a real relationship with someone, and the possibility of drawing the strands of my personality back together again.

If there are any other sisters who have suffered from this problem get in touch through Spare Rib if you think talking about it would help, and one word of advice, if you are getting a vibrator get a reasonably expensive one. It will work better and keep going longer, it's certainly a worthwhile investment. ■

NEWS

Schools and hospitals in East London are in crisis. The teacher shortage in secondary schools has resulted in part-time schooling, rapid staff turnover and employment of temporary staff, less help for slow learners, and an increase in truancy. Teachers and parents have been getting together to demand a radical improvement in the education their children receive, and next month's Spare Rib will explore the background to the campaign. Hospital workers have also been fighting, together with people in their community, to defend Poplar Hospital from closure....

EAST LONDON NOW

Poplar Hospital stands at the entrance to the Blackwall Tunnel. It's a small community hospital which has served dockland for generations. Before the introduction of the NHS in 1948, it was funded by most of the local works; its maternity wing - one of three wards bombed during the 2nd World War - had been upheld by dockers for their wives to have their children in a decent place.

Since 1948 the people of Poplar have been promised a new hospital. "Nine times it's been on the plans but nine times it's been cancelled", Gwen Evans, a NUPE steward at Poplar, said. There's another promise for a new hospital in 1975, but Gwen thinks "it's just going to be a plan on a bit of paper and torn up the next year."

There's a shortage of GPs in the East End too. "The whole of this area holds about 49 GPs for a population of around 70,000 - and more to come in. I think in Newham they've got 25,000 flats going up in the near future: they've got plenty of ground now, since the docks are being closed and all the works are going out. But they've got to bring the workers back into London to keep London running."

Last Christmas Poplar's casualty department was closed by administrative decree. The threat to small inner city hospitals like

Poplar comes from the specialisation of hospital medicine dating back to 1948. Enoch Powell's Hospital Building Plan of 1962 began the trend towards centralisation of resources. Based on the concept of the District General Hospital with 800-1000 beds, it was designed to make full use of an increasingly complicated medical technology: intensive care units, radiology, laboratory testing, and so on.

Gwen described the situation under the Thames Hospital Management Group, which includes the London - a teaching hospital - as well as Poplar. "Big hospitals are what they call the blood-suckers of the service now, because just to be kept going they've got to be given most of the



Gwen Evans



Photo Ann Scott

A member of Poplar Action Committee, carrying a placard saying 'Don't take the heart out of Poplar', with a junior hospital doctor after the demonstration on February 23rd reached the London Hospital in Whitechapel. The banner, 'London Hospital Health Students', was held by medical students in solidarity with the people of Poplar.

money. St Andrews' is the one they're 'improving' on for the area. But no matter what you try putting on to an old building, you can't make it into a new one. I know for a fact St Andrews' will not cope, because all they're building is an outdoor clinic. Bigger hospitals have been eating up your doctoring, your nursing. A nurse, if she's got an open chance of getting into the London, is not going to turn it down to go into Poplar You've got to go round the East End to see the state hospitals are in.

This is why we want to demand a new one. You've got to work in them, love, and get to know them - and I've worked in most of them."

The decision to close Poplar became a reality about two and a half years ago. Workers in the hospital got up a petition and two MPs, Sir Elwyn Jones and Peter Shore, became involved. "We had the Church very strongly behind us. They thought it was wrong to close Poplar, because of the area. These men go round and they see people, and they understand."

The Poplar Action Committee became stronger at the time of the six-week NUPE strike last March. "When we went out to fight, we began to realise what they was doing with Poplar. They had to come out with it because of us going on strike. Then I got chosen as a shop steward, and asked the

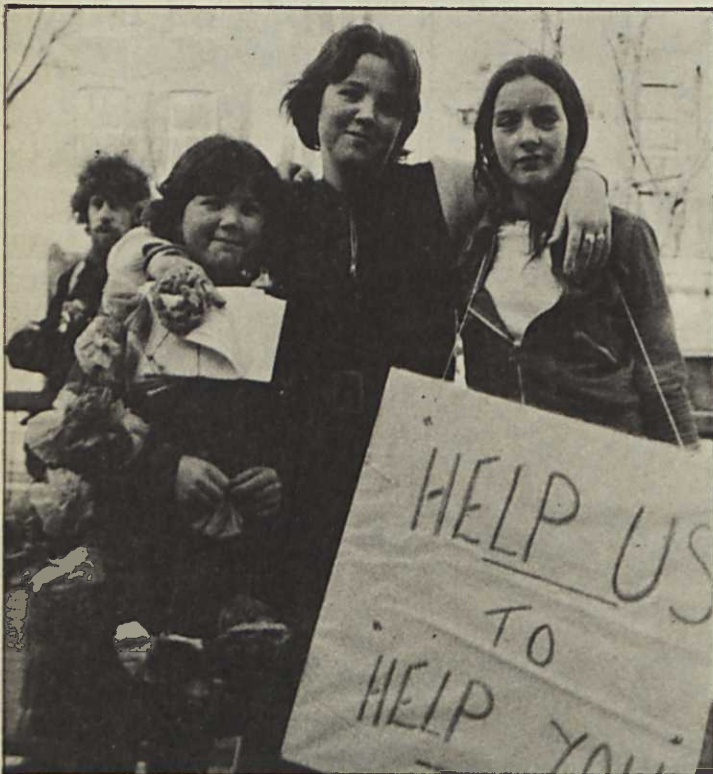
more than our jobs. The East End loses a hospital which has given good service for years. And the way is opened for shutting down all the small East End hospitals", the leaflet said.

The demo was a small one, though. "We sent out leaflets to all the other hospitals, but you saw

you start getting too many junior nurses, and your professional nurses going out. They can strip you in five minutes of those nursing staff, because you have no training facilities there."

"I think you need the unions now more than ever. Nurses and doctors too need unions to

pitals than keeping them open". At the moment bourgeois planners and welfare economists consider that you need 2½ hospital beds per 1000 population: in percentage terms there are more beds in the East End than in parts of Essex, and since they're scattered on various sites they're difficult to



Local kids wearing paper flowers made specially for the demonstration.



'East Enders Demand - Re-open Poplar Hospital'.

union to become involved. The union fought harder, because they wasn't filled in before."

The Action Committee went to the Regional Hospital Board and experienced its complacency. "You sit there, they say they understand. They know *nothing* about the area. Sir Keith Joseph said that the hospital would be re-opened. Yes it is, it's open, but there's nothing doing. The main body, the heart of the hospital is gone - and that's your receiving place, casualty. They waited for the holiday time, then they'd strip a bit *more* off of Poplar. You could have a terrible accident outside Poplar and you still can't attend to it. You've got doctors whose hands are tied behind their backs, they can't use their profession. But that's not the whole point. With Poplar open, we were still 300 beds short: when they close Poplar that'll make us 500 short."

The closure of the casualty department gave the campaign a new urgency. A demonstration was planned for February 23rd, demanding its re-opening. "We, the staff at Poplar, ask for a cast-iron guarantee that our hospital be kept fully open. If Poplar is closed we lose

how many turned up", Gwen said. "Unfortunately, on the Friday there was a Council ad put in the Evening Standard, which everyone buys round here - it's an East End paper - saying that Poplar Hospital's staying open until 1975. So that more or less stopped everybody from coming. You can't blame them: they thought that what they was going to do on that day had already been done for them. I'm sure we put everything in that three weeks, sore feet and all."

The procedures for closing hospitals are vague, and this vagueness makes the community peculiarly impotent. "I don't know why they went out to close Poplar seeing as the new Area Authorities were coming. It just don't make sense to me, because they've done it in less than a year. It's still a real puzzle, because there's worse hospitals in this Thames Group than Poplar."

"I just don't know what the East Enders can do to convince these people. We've got a promise that the hospital will stay open until 1975, but the nursing staff have given in their notice. So how do you keep a hospital open with no nurses? I tell you, if any hospital gets a sure sign of what we got, then be very much aware that you're going to be the next to be closed:

fight these people at the top. You get a lot of laymen who sit at their pretty little desks and give orders. They know how to save money but they don't know what they're saving it on. They could be saving it on a person's life, who could die."

All the cleaners and porters at Poplar are in NUPE. "I think if the domestics, porters and engineers want to work together for a better hospital, they should keep closer together. There's a different kind of shop steward coming into hospitals now - more aware of the big capacity of their jobs. With the shop stewards courses coming up - they go there to learn and they're not afraid of facing management - they can do an awful lot in the near future to help these hospitals."

The struggle for Poplar Hospital shows the contradiction between the needs of centralised planning and the needs expressed by people who have lifetimes of experience of a community. There's a split too in the language that is used. Official language tells you that "The specialisation of hospital medicine has brought great dividends from the patient's point of view... it has a great therapeutic advantage over home treatment... given overall shortage of resources there is a stronger case for closing small hos-

staff. Thus while the NHS is made managerially more efficient, women like Gwen are listened to less and less:

"I don't think you can ever mechanise a hospital: there's different accidents, and people act so differently in accidents. I don't think you can ever mechanise a human being, to say you can use a ward like an immaculate new toothbrush. It never works."

Ann Scott



Kids outside the London Hospital.

Women & Psychiatry Conference

Phobia...depression...anxiety state...
 psychosis...aversion...getting well...
 acting out...being 'odd'...paranoia...
 HOW IT FEELS INSIDE THE HEAD...

"Following the exploratory workshop on the theme 'Women and Psychiatry' at last year's Women's Liberation conference in Bristol, some of us in Malvern Women's Liberation wanted to pursue ideas raised there further, preferably towards a programme of practical action."
Vicky Randall describes a conference held at the end of February.

We decided to use the large country house where some Malvern members live communally for an afternoon discussion, which we planned to divide roughly into 1) consideration of existing systems of treatment and approaches to "mental illness" in women, and 2) a review of possible alternatives.

About fifty women came, including psychiatric hospital nurses and social workers, local authority social workers, psychologists researching into relevant areas at the Maudesley Hospital in London, medical and social work students, women writing on the subject or related topics, and women who've been treated. The atmosphere was tense at times, but all the discussions were very involving.

Three papers were presented, including one on 'Basic concepts and research relating to women and psychiatry', which showed how the psychiatrist acts as an unconscious political agent, reinforcing "norms" of female behaviour. One piece of research showed how male psychiatrists expect a "healthy, normal female" to be "more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, more easily hurt, more emotional, more conceited about appearance, less objective and less interested in maths and

science." A second looked at the 'Psychiatric processing machine', i.e. the structure of psychiatric care: who you'll meet, the jargon you'll hear, how you'll be classified, and so on. But we came up against some of the characteristic problems of any conference. Despite our planned framework, discussion tended to be somewhat unfocused. For example, there were several inconclusive debates: are depressions totally hormonal or totally psychological? Or is the interaction between physiology and psychology more complicated than that? We wondered too whether the trend towards returning long term psychiatric patients to the community would just mean more strain on the nuclear family, but this was not pursued.

Much criticism was directed at the whole 'processing machine', not just women's treatment in it. We learned also that women are significantly more prone to "mental illness" than men - perhaps because women's aggression is characteristically turned inwards. And in any case we were soon questioning whether one could alter treatment of women without reforming hierarchical hospital structures - it's well known that nurses in psychiatric hospitals are not supposed to express views about how patients should be treated, although they're the ones who are in closest contact with patients - and changing public attitudes.

The basic criticisms of this 'pro-

cessing machine' emerged as 1) that a minority of those treated are "cured", 2) treatment is usually symptom- rather than cause-oriented, 3) related to this, patients are not really seen as individuals with unique combinations of problems, except in the various forms of psychotherapy, which are inordinately demanding of specialised labour, and 4) the overall shortage of necessary resources.

But a woman patient has the extra disadvantage that this process is male-dominated. Specific research into female personality is little in evidence. Various schools of psychoanalysis do have theories and an interest in this area but don't have much impact on psychiatry. As one speaker suggestively put it,

"If a woman gets out of phase with herself and her situation, even if she is treated as an individual, the process is not in her interest - there's no-one to bring her back."

This led us on to a discussion of alternatives. Although there's no conclusive evidence on the effectiveness of different treatments, most of us felt psychotherapy the most congruent with human dignity; though people disagreed about how far psychotherapists could or should manipulate you. For example, when one woman described her experience of analysis, another suggested that her relationship to her analyst appeared to have been a remarkably passive one.

It also seems that effectiveness in psychotherapy depends mainly on

the therapist's personality - particularly how sympathetic and encouraging they are. We'd like to see the practice of co-counselling, in which therapy is largely demystified and egalitarian, extended; but also wondered whether women like ourselves could organise something like the Samaritans' service for unhappy women. There are obvious problems: firstly, it's exactly the women who most need such help who would be most put off by the public image of Women's Liberation. We'd need to acquire a reassuring image and name. Secondly, it would take greater resources of organisation and commitment than we can currently muster. Thirdly, some minimal training in recognising different kinds of distress would probably be necessary. So while this remains an ultimate objective we shouldn't rush in prematurely.

We also discussed less ambitious action and this was explored further at a follow-up meeting of women who'd been at the conference, living in London. This London group is now looking into the possibility of compiling a woman's directory of what different kinds of help are available to her. And we're considering several issues, such as post-natal depression, the use of sedatives, women's happiness in their current roles and so on to find a suitable focus for some research-based publicity.

We have a lot of ideas and commitment but would welcome more: could anyone interested please contact me at work (01-580 2020 ext 321) or write to me at 115 Cannon Street Road, London E.1.



The chairman of the Monopolies Commission (left) with Dr. Adolf Jann (right), chairman of Hoffman-La Roche.

WOMEN ON TRIAL

Eight women went on trial on February 27th at Marylebone Magistrates Court on charges arising out of an incident on January 13th at the New Inn public house, St. Johns Wood, where they were refused a second round of drinks before closing time without explanation. The publican called the police and the women were variously charged with threatening behaviour, obstruction, assault, actual bodily harm and criminal damage to property.

The women issued a leaflet calling for support and suggesting that in being refused drinks without an explanation from the publican, they were being discriminated against as women – specifically women unescorted by men. The leaflet called attention to their treatment at St. Johns Wood police station, where, they alleged, they were kept for six hours before being charged.

The *Daily Express* carried a report on the first hearing of the trial – at which the prosecution stated its case and the publican gave his testimony – in an article by Frank Thompson entitled “‘Animal’ girls invasion”. The women considered that the tone of the article prejudiced the reader – which would include the Magistrate hearing the case – to draw the conclusion that the defendants were guilty before the trial was finished. A successful application for a Contempt of Court hearing against Frank Thompson and Ian McColl, editor of the *Daily Express*, was made by Faith McDevitt, one of the defendants, in the High Court on March 15th.

Lord Widgery, Lord Chief Justice, who heard the application, said that the case “perhaps gives rise to an important question as to the nature of reports of judicial proceedings which are permissible when the proceedings are not complete.”

“In the article concerned the prosecution’s case is reported to seem like fact”, the women said in a press statement. The article begins: “The words ‘Time gents, please’, brought a storm of abuse on the landlord’s head – plus a

bar stool aimed AT his head. This was not the usual reaction at the plush New Inn at St. Johns Wood, North London. But that Sunday afternoon the sudden wave of violence did not come from landlord David Thomas’s usual customers. The lounge was packed with 14 angry women, staging a defiant and aggressive Women’s Lib sit-in, it was alleged at Marylebone court yesterday”. The women felt that the article set out to belittle both the defendants – two of whom were defending themselves with the aid of McKenzie advisers, described in the article as “‘legal advisers’, two girl friends” – and the defence counsel, described as “young female solicitors”. A photo of the defendants’ supporters was captioned “part of the crowd who later packed into the Women’s Lib trial yesterday”.

There were twenty women supporters in the public gallery when the trial resumed on March 18th; a placard saying ‘Animal Newsmen Stop Oppressing Our Sisters’ was removed from the court. Apart from reporters from the *Morning Star* and *Spare Rib*, all the reporters were men.

The only prosecution witness to give evidence that day was Anthony Crammond, a company director who admitted in evidence that he visits the pub two or three times a week and is a friend of the landlord. He thought the women were “a bit of a nuisance. . . they were preventing other people from getting any benefit from the fire.” When they moved to the farthest point of the pub, near the ladies’ lavatory, he believed they were blocking the entrance to that also. He added that one of the women was “rather abusive” when the landlord refused to serve them, and testified to the “viciousness of their attacks on the police”.

Under cross-examination he said that the women “didn’t improve the atmosphere of the public house”. When asked by the defence, he did not recall a policeman holding a woman by her hair, nor a policeman with his arm round the neck of one of the women, nor one of the women shouting “Stop, you’re hurting my leg”.

Under cross-examination by Nina Stanger, Crammond stated that once the women moved away from the fire, they were no inconvenience to him, and that the publican gave no reason for his refusal to serve them. He said that he would have felt entitled to be served another drink at closing time, had he wanted one.

He could not remember what the woman said to the publican. “She used some oaths . . . I think she said something like ‘you lousy bastard’”. It was quite obvious there was trouble brewing, you could feel it in the air.” Nina Stanger suggested that she asked the publican for an explanation “in a forceful, though polite voice”. Crammond recalled the publican saying “‘I don’t want them here again’”.

He had testified that he saw “one of the policeman lying on the ground with a woman who had either tripped him up, or . . .” Nina Stanger said to the magistrate that it was clear Crammond was “taking a particular view of who attacked whom.” She asked him whether he supported the publican’s action in calling the police, to which he said the question was irrelevant. “I suggest that all your evidence is coloured by your view that the police should have been called”, she said.

Jackie Finkle, conducting her own defence, suggested that Crammond was prejudiced precisely “because we’re a group of women who don’t feel the need to be accompanied by men”. When Faith McDevitt, also conducting her own defence, asked whether there were any crowds of men in the pub, Crammond said “Men usually stand up, and talk in twos or threes; never more than four or five to a table.” When he admitted in evidence to having read an account of the trial in the *Daily Express*, Faith McDevitt suggested that the vagueness of Crammond’s evidence derived from his reticence “to say what really happened; and if you did, then there’d be eight policemen in the dock.”

The trial resumed on April 22nd with the prosecution continuing their case. The next issue of *Spare Rib* will carry a report of the hearing.

Ann Scott

against miss england

About 100 demonstrators picketed a preliminary heat for the Miss England contest at the Mecca ballroom in Leeds on February 22nd. The picket included members of four Leeds W.L. groups, Gay Liberation Front, Leeds Libertarians and the International Marxist Group, as well as students. We carried banners and placards and gave out leaflets.

Two transvestite members of GLF turned up in drag and chained themselves and several women together with a huge paper chain. We were very encouraged by women’s reactions in taking our

leaflet sometimes in the face of expressed male disapproval. Some men did physically prevent their women from taking one.

One man, who was accompanied by two silent girls, said when refusing a leaflet, ‘My women are liberated’. Their blank stares were tragic. There were some silly remarks about bras, but no violence.

We hope other groups have taken action over these contests. It’s well worth continually hammering away at the public spectacle, though no substitute for grass roots activity.

Information from a member of Leeds Women’s Liberation.



women's day march

2,000 women marched to Hyde Park on Saturday March 9th to celebrate International Women's Day: women's liberation groups, trade unionists, students demanding equal grants for married women, teachers. There were banners too from battered wives centres and women's centres.



Photo Angela Phillips

After arriving at Hyde Park 250 women marched to the Home Office with a petition demanding that the new Labour government transfer the Price sisters, who had been on hunger strike since November, to prison in Northern Ireland. "If you don't trust British justice, clap your hands", the women sang. "The Price sisters must be free."

Later in the afternoon there was a rally at Central Hall, Westminster. "We must be able not only to tackle issues like



Photo Angela Phillips

abortion and contraception, but be equally willing to tackle those who make profit, those who get totally disproportionate advantages from women's work", said Audrey Wise, a militant in the shop workers' union USDAW and newly elected Labour MP. Tess Gill, co-author of Women's Rights - A Practical Guide, called for an anti-discrimination board with power to carry out its own investigations, and new legislation to cover education, taxation and pensions.

The media chose to ignore the march almost completely. Only the Morning Star gave it front page coverage. The Daily Mirror, for example, printed a large photo of streakers at Marble Arch and said that the men timed their streak to coincide with a "Women's Lib" demonstration.

woman's identity campaign

The Woman's Identity Campaign is being set up through the Women's Liberation Workshop: its basic aim is to have the prefix Ms on all official documents, "so that those women who prefer to use the prefix may do so freely". Shireen Bano, whose struggles with the Passport Office were described in Spare Rib 21, anticipates that it may take a long time to achieve this aim. The immediate need is for extensive publicity: each woman should pressurise offices, like the Passport Office, and MPs; and send a few lines of support to the W.I.C., c/o 38 Earlham Street, London WC2.

By the end of March Shireen had received over forty letters of support for the Ms campaign, including organisations like the Scottish Council for Single Parents and St Joan's International Alliance; and letters from individual women like



the following:

Ms Shameem Kabir, London W2: "Language is a powerful means by which our attitudes are formed. Therefore as long as terms such as 'Miss' and 'Mrs' exist, there can never be equality of the sexes; women will always be considered the property of men, either by being 'owned' (married) or 'rejected' (unmarried)."

C. Edwards, St Mary Abbots Hospital, London W8: "I cannot see why women seem to be expected to specify their marital status on every form they fill in. It should have been abolished years ago following the Women's Property Act."

Anne Harvey, Birmingham:

"I used to think names and methods of address were trivial until I changed my name back to my maiden name and saw the effect it had on me and the people around me."

Eileen Fairweather, Brighton: "I wrote to you earlier in response to your request for support and information ... At that point I was awaiting a reply from my bank who had simply ignored my own request, I then sending them a very deferential note, and, lo and behold, even though not yet due for another, a new book of cheques marked 'Ms'."

Alison Malet and Rosy Smith, Dundee: "Dundee Corporation now uses M/s in communications. The more we use it - for example on Post Office forms - the more it will be an accepted form of address."

Ms Mary Akehurst, London SW17: "Of course it was asking too much to expect the Chief Passport Officer (male - naturally) to understand the need for us to have a prefix which identifies us with our sex and not relating us to a man - eg whether we married one or not!"

Ms J Thomson, London NW3: "In the spring of 72 I got a new passport through the Vancouver branch of the Canadian Passport Office. At that time I specifically asked for Ms to be used, and this

was done with no apparent hassle."

Vale Benson, Southampton: "Once when I was putting a rather unimportant little ad in a local paper I asked for Ms to be used and was met with reluctance and total non-comprehension. Even after I had explained, they kept asking me if I was a 'company' (capitalism strikes again) and seemed, in spite of my denials, to assume that I was, although they did use Ms."

I do think it is a very important issue and has not been taken seriously enough at all by the women's movement in Britain."

ESSAY COMPETITION

New Women in a New Society

Prizes consisting of grants from the F.C.C. Watts Memorial Fund (administered by the Rationalist Press Association) are offered for the three best essays on NEW WOMEN IN A NEW SOCIETY.

The prizes will cover free attendance (including travelling expenses up to £5) at the RPA Annual Conference at St Peter's College, Oxford, 13-15 September 1974. In addition, the first prize-winner will receive a cash award of £10.

Entries of not more than 2,000 words should be typed or legibly written on one side of the paper only, should state the entrant's name, address and age, and should be sent to:

The Secretary,
RPA Ltd.,
88 Islington High Street,
London N1 8EW.

Closing Date 30 June 1974.
Age Limit 30.

Cartoon Jeanette Sutton

working women's charter

The meeting held by the London Trades Council on Tuesday 19th March was very welcome to women, many of whom outside the trade unions concern themselves with the struggle of working class women. The **WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER** which was drawn up by the London Trades Council included issues which are not usually taken up by the trades union movement, but which are very familiar to women in the women's movement.

This suggested a common framework around which women from different organisations could come together in the struggle to implement the stated aims. Although the London Trades Council is disbanding, and the desired organisational links between women affiliated to different groups were not made, the charter as a statement of intent could provide the beginning of a closer link between women inside and outside the trade unions. The charter was in fact passed as a resolution at the Women and Socialism conference on the Four Demands of the women's movement on 23rd March, and the task that now seems to remain is to set up an organisational form which will ensure a successful fight.

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER

We pledge ourselves to agitate and organise to achieve the following aims;

- 1) The rate for the job, regardless of sex, at rates negotiated by the trades unions, with a national minimum wage below which no wages should fall.
- 2) Equal opportunity of entry into occupation and in promotion, regardless of sex and marital state.
- 3) Equal education and training for all occupations and compulsory day release for all 16-19 year olds in employment.
- 4) Working conditions to be, without deterioration of previous conditions, the same for women as for men.
- 5) The removal of all legal and bureaucratic impediments to equality e.g. with regard to tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, control over children, social security payments, hire-purchase agreements.
- 6) Improved provisions of local authority day nurseries, free of



charge, with extended hours to suit working mothers. Provision of nursery classes in day nurseries. More nursery schools.

7) 18 weeks maternity leave with full net pay before and after the birth of a live child; seven weeks after birth if the child is stillborn. No dismissal during pregnancy or maternity leave. No loss of security, pension or promotion prospects.

8) Family planning clinics supplying free contraception to be extended to cover every locality. Free abortion to be readily available.

9) Family allowances to be increased to £2.50 per child, including the first child.

10) To campaign among women to take an active part in the trade unions and in political life so that they may exercise influence commensurate with their numbers and to campaign amongst men trade unionists that they may work to achieve this aim.

Cathy Haw



Dear Spare Rib,
Among a number of minor inaccuracies in the news item (Spare Rib no 21) about the ACTT research into discrimination against its women members there is one statement attributed to me which I would like to correct.

I did not actually say 'a lot of women are attracted to TV and films for the wrong reason - glamour'. People want to work in TV and films for a variety of reasons; where 'glamour' is one of those reasons it is as commonly

found amongst men as women. I would certainly not label any motive for choosing this area of work as "right" or "wrong".

There are certainly jobs in TV and film which require women rather than men to sell, by their appearance and behaviour, the glamorous image of the industry. But if there is any point in making a distinction between people who are attracted by a 'glamorous image', that distinction can more validly be made between the TV/film industry and the laboratory processing industry. The latter, which is an integral part of TV and film production, is little different from any other manufacturing work.

Discrimination against women - and often black people - is just as entrenched, but receives considerably less attention.

Finally, if any of your readers have encountered discrimination in work in ACTT grades, I would be very grateful if they could let me know.

Yours,
Sarah Benton,
ACTT Researcher,
ACTT,
2 Soho Square,
London W1V 6DD.

Dear Spare Rib,
I was horrified by the article by Christine Aziz on the ACTT woman researcher - it was totally inaccurate, insultingly so. Misquotes, misinformation, lies - we expect all that in the straight press but not Spare Rib. The writer need only check back copies of Spare Rib to get her facts straight - no. 13 (July 73) in an article by Esther Ronay. 'Women in Media' did not put up the motions to conference, they did not merely "point out serious unrest". The Women's Film Group has written several articles for Spare Rib about women camera operators etc - they

do not only exist in Russia. Women certainly do want to know about technical grades - and Sarah never said they didn't. Nor did she say women were in the film industry for glamour - nor that that was a 'wrong' reason.

A dreadful article altogether. Not checked. None of the women involved in ACTT action asked for information.

Yours sisterly,
Linda Dove, London S.W.11

ECONOMICS

studying it

Birkbeck College is a special part of the University of London dedicated to teaching part-time degree courses for those who would otherwise find it difficult to get a university education. Its economics department - whose staff of ten includes two women - is now in its first year of offering a part-time M.Sc course in economics. The course extends over two years with an extra preliminary year.

Before the course began the staff hoped that women in particular would apply; women with degrees, for example, who had left their jobs to bring up kids but wanted to go back to work. But only 10% of the applicants were women. "Economics seems to have obtained some strange masculine mystique that perhaps alienates women from trying it", Carol Nussey, one of the teachers, said.

Ten percent of the current first year are women; this is relatively high given the current percentage of women in economics, both academically and in business. But 10% is still a tiny number considering that women make up 51% of the population in this country; and as you go up from the preliminary year to research in Birkbeck, the numbers of women get smaller. Sue Himmelweit wondered whether "we're doing this too late, because women may have been prejudiced against economics at O and A level".

So the department is now practising positive discrimination in favour of women applicants. "Even the men in this department

bend over backwards for the needs of a woman", Carol said. "One woman couldn't do her take-home exam over the Christmas vacation, because she had to look after her kids; so we rescheduled the exam." Although the department is a small one, "I think we have the largest percentage of women on the staff. At LSE there's one woman economist out of a staff of fifty."

At the moment two women are taking the main M.Sc course, both of them part time: a civil servant and a journalist on the *Times Higher Educational Supplement*. There are four women in the preliminary course: a teacher, a civil servant, a woman who works on *The Economist*, and a woman in business. But there are still problems for women with kids who want to study: one woman on the main course, who had two young children and a degree in maths and statistics, dropped out after six

"We want to expand this course: there's a whole branch of economics which needs looking into, and that's women's economics - the economics of discrimination against women. It's also about things that aren't usually considered the subject matter of economics, like housework."
Sue Himmelweit

months because she couldn't cope with the course and the kids.

"We are in the tradition of ordinary university academic economics, but we want the theory to be adapted to the real world", Carol said. The course offers development economics and marxist economics, as well as more orthodox topics like international economics and history of economic thought. There are plans too for a course on economic discrimination against women, to be taught jointly by Sue and Carol.

The experience of the Birkbeck course raises questions which feminists must explore. To what extent do we want to compete in the labour market? Do we want to be part of the male academic scene? Can we change existing social structures from within, through courses such as this one? The two women on the staff are sensitive to these questions: Carol said she feels schizophrenic about whether women should accept the competitive terms of reference of the

business world.

There is another side to this project, though, which relates to women's consciousness and understanding of their situation. Many women in the women's movement are expressing a need to explore economic matters: the Birkbeck course provides one way of continuing this exploration. It could help women to gain confidence, as well. Sue commented that "lack of confidence is a woman's special problem in academic work".

Ann Scott

Application forms are available from the Registrar, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX, and should be sent in by May 31st.

The course can be taken full or part-time. The part time course involves three sessions a week at the College (6-9pm) and ten hours additional work per week. Fees are £40 p.a. for the main M.Sc course part time; the exam fee for the main M.Sc is £25.



Cartoon Amy Fawcett

understanding it

We asked for comments on Jean Gardiner's piece on inflation in *Spare Rib* 21, and suggestions about other economic topics that could be looked at. Most of the women who wrote to us were excited by the projected series, and particularly liked the glossary.

Others reacted to the article differently, for example Deborah Levy in Brighton: "I very significantly left the article on economics to last because I felt that the other material seemed to be more interesting... I don't think Jean Gardiner's article was particularly difficult but I found that after reading it I had absorbed nothing and in fact had to force

myself to finish it to the end because there was such a lot of tension and anxiety within me whilst I was reading it. Do you think there is an easy solution apart from 'keep plodding on in the hope that something will click'? I would like to hear what other women feel about this."

Oonagh Hartnett in Cardiff suggested several topics:

- "1) The budget plus an analysis of where the country's resources come from and where they go.
- 2) Wealth distribution (a) in this country, (b) in the world, with suggestions and plans for redistribution.
- 3) The changing labour force - production to service and the emerging white collar sector.

- 4) The various relationships between national and power groups in the world - (a) countries/nations, (b) economic blocks, (c) the effect of international companies."

Elisabeth Gharial in London SW2 made the following comments:

"There are plenty of other things to explain in the same methodical way... Unemployment: Is it correct that a country has a choice of either full employment and inflation, or unemployment and a slow rate of inflation? Why is it necessary for our economy to keep a certain number of people unemployed?... Defence expenses as a buffer for the economy: The arms industry creates consumption (wages to the workers) but no productivity can come from the products - they are made for destruction. Does this

keep up private consumption in times of depression? How important is Britain's arms industry to the economy?

"... I always hear the argument that it's bad with nationalisation because the state-run industries are on the point of collapse and the tax-payers have to put money into them. I have a feeling that when Labour were nationalising in the forties, they took over industries that were nearly bankrupt anyway. Is that right?

"... Women and immigrants as reserve labour. I think it is very important to understand why the British industry encouraged immigration from Jamaica and India in the fifties and some years on, until the industry slackened and didn't need this reserve."

In the next few months Jean will explore some of these areas.

NEW SCHOOL W.I.I



Photo Martin Head

The New Community School in Norland Road, Shepherd's Bush, stands at the beginning of a motorway and next to a series of high-rise flats. The building, which is shared with the Boxmoor Community Centre, was let by Hammersmith Council; the school and the centre are run as a charitable trust, but most of the running costs are met out of the fees - at present £65 per term. The school is run as a parent co-operative; its members "are most anxious to make the school free and therefore available to more local children".

There's one teacher-in-charge, who's responsible for what happens in the building day by day and organising the others who teach in the school. In February, for example, there were four part timers and at least two regular parent volunteers. One of the trustees looks after dinners once a week; Leila Calaman, whom I spoke to about the school, takes the kids swimming once a week.

Leila described the origins of the school. It started in January 1973 in the basement flat of one of the parents. A group of parents had coalesced who were "committed to taking their kids out of the state system. Some of them didn't like any state schools, some of them didn't like the local ones. Nobody knew what we were doing, nobody knew what our ideals were, except that we were somehow committed to some kind of community feeling - where the school and the home are fused, so that there is no private

and public."

"Children are socially aware. The thing the state schools do is rub it out of them. When you take a child and say 'we're going to do maths, we're going to do English', which in their context are all very social things, and you make them a 'subject' - which is the way state schools are run - then you put blinkers on people, which we don't intend to do." There are no subjects as such in the New School: there's a time when clay modelling is available, the kids do number projects, a lot of woodworking, they take electronic things apart. "If something is broken in this building, everybody fixes it. It's not a matter of 'Well, time off from studies while we fix the window'; the window is part of what goes on every day."

I asked Leila what changes she had seen in the year the school's been open. "Everybody has gone through changes. Everybody has rubbed shoulders with people they would never have considered working with. With the first bunch of kids, who had already been attending state schools, we went through our first four months, at least, basically letting out all of the gaps that we thought state schools were putting on. We let everything happen; we didn't particularly try to check the chaos and the aggression that came out, because it had to work its way out - as long as it

didn't get too heavy, especially for the little ones."

"There was hitting, name-calling, and bullying. Most of it was put on the little ones - the five or six-year olds. But for the five year olds, it was their first school experience, and they were as sweet as could be, because they had no reason to have anything crushed or warped inside of them."

At the end of March this year there were fourteen kids in the school, slightly more girls than boys. Leila talked about the importance of breaking down sex roles. "We just try and make sure that there aren't any sex roles, so that whatever happens - whether it's washing up, cooking, wood-working, playing out in the back, or sewing - it's not a matter of encouraging girls or boys to do or not do, it's basically that every-

body is a person. We cooked before, in our first building, and boys and girls cooked." Even so, the experience of the weekly food co-op at the Centre shows that sex roles are instilled early on in people's lives and will take a long long time to be resolved. "We've got some local girls coming around; they help with the food co-op. Actually a lot of the boys do too; but doing the building up, it's almost all boys."

The school is a learning experience for the parents as well as for the kids. "If an adult is responsive to a child - and you can't say adults are bad by virtue of the fact that they're not children, which is kind of popular - then an adult can have a very nice relationship with a child. This is a kid-oriented environment."

Women's Sit-ins

About 40 Brunel University students and some of their children occupied the Vice-Chancellor's office on Marche 6th after a student union general meeting demanded that a creche be provided by the University. The student union and the university women's group had already set up a small creche, but it was "neither adequate nor satisfactory", the student union resolution said.

Women students with their children staged a sit-in about married women's grants when men from the University Grants Committee made one of their three-yearly visits to Essex University in February. The demonstration took place inside the university restaurant, where the UGC representatives were having lunch: meals there cost around £1, which is prohibitive when the maximum student grant is £485 p.a. In fact the children were herded out before the arrival of the UGC because the woman looking after the kids (who were out on half term) was a member of the weekend catering staff, and she was ordered to remove them by a supervisor. Nonetheless the women made their point: they were angry and shouting about it. The event showed too how campus workers and students can help each other.

Information from Ruth Cooke, Colchester Women's Group

The Ones That Got Away

Even a casual reader of newspapers can find enough sexism in an average daily to make her throw it down in rage... Zoe Fairbairns brings you some of the obscure stories you may have missed the first time, the ones that got away.

This wasn't the worst month ever known for media treatment of women. There were some quite good stories here and there. The *Daily Express*, for instance, ran a series on the less idyllic aspects of motherhood, entitled, "Mother's Day is Over" a piece of demystification of the type rarely found in the popular press.

Dom Moraes had a good article in the *Sunday Times* on February 24 on the subject of how Latin-Catholic machismo - which translates loosely as male chauvinism - impedes development of family planning services in South America. But it's hard to know whether to laugh or cry at his tale of how, when the Pope visited Bogota in 1968, all the women with

IUDs rushed to their family planning clinics to have them removed. When the Pope left, they all rushed back to have them fitted again...

But it wasn't all good news. Usual media tricks have served to trivialise and distort women's news. When Thames Television's make-up artists returned to work after a four day strike on February 22, the *Western Mail* heralded the news with the headline "POWDER-PUFF GIRLS KISS AND MAKE UP:" and predictable treatment has been given to MP William Hamilton's claim that nurses are so ill-paid that some find themselves tempted to sleep with men for the price of a meal. Perhaps it wasn't the most well-judged of claims, but Mr Hamilton's words have been carefully twisted by journalists and cartoonists to make them appear to have been an attack on nurses' morals rather than a claim for a living wage. Thus the

Express on March 14 was able to quote a nurse from a London hospital saying that Mr Hamilton was talking "utter nonsense"... and the issue of nurses' pay was swept under the carpet yet again.

The Invisible Woman is alive and well and taking part in the "Brain-of-Britain" quiz contest on BBC Radio 4. Listeners who have thought they were imagining things when contestants were introduced at the start of the programme, and all the male contestants were identified by name and occupation while the females seemed only to have names, can rest assured that this is definite "Brain-of-Britain" policy. "Brain-of-Britain" producer Martin Fisher explains: "We have a rule that if a female contestant is married and does not have a job outside the home, rather than call her a 'housewife' and stir up ardent women's libbers all over the country, we prefer to say nothing at all!" Dear Mr Fisher, it is not housewives that we detest, it is men who treat housewives as if they have no occupation...

It will soon not be necessary for Women's Liberation to take actions against Miss World contests. The Miss World Industry is revealing and destroying itself. The news that

Marjorie Wallace has been sacked from being Miss World because of the indiscretions of her private life, shows far more effectively than *Women's Liberation* ever could, the type of sexuality that this 'ideal woman' figure is supposed to possess. Pretty, young, shapely, blonde? Yes, indeed. Smiling, powdered, and not too talkative? Indubitably. Unmarried and thus suitable for fantasies? Of course. But actually having relationships with men, openly and without shame? You must be joking. And so Ms Wallace was fired. And even the *Daily Express's* Sandy Fawkes, was moved to suggest to Mecca supremo Eric Morley that he "start really looking at the girls of today and seeing them as real people - not just as sex objects to be exploited for the sake of the money, however worthy the cause."

"DR BRIDGET MAY BE DISGUISED AS A MAN" gasped the *London Evening Standard* on February 25, headlining its report of the search for Bridget Dugdale in connection with alleged arms smuggling. Dr Dugdale occasionally wears "female attire," the report explained, but she "usually wears jeans or trousers." Which is presumably what they mean by being disguised as a man.

Here's to Life

JOAN BAEZ
Sings in Spanish
New album on A&M Records



A&M RECORDS
AMLH 63614

SHORTLIST

compiled by Julia Shaw

Feel free to send any information to Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh Street, London W1A 4XS

events

Gay Women's Conference, Canterbury, 27th-28th April.

In response to the growing number of gay women actively involved in the gay and women's movements, and the desire expressed by gay women to come together more often, the 1st National Gay Women's Conference is to be held at the University of Kent at Canterbury, starting Friday evening 26th April, and continuing until Sunday 28th.

Welsh Region Women's Liberation Conference.

This will take place 27th-28th April, Saturday 2pm - Sunday 3pm.

Accommodation and creche facilities available. For further details write to Joan Evans, 5 Seaview Pl, Aberystwyth or phone Aberystwyth 4586.

Anti-SPUC Rally

Anyone interested in supporting some kind of counter demonstration to SPUC's White Flower Rally in Hyde Park on 28 April, please contact Harrow And Hillingdon Socialist Women's Group, Sue Spilling, 54 Harrow Rd., Mddx. (836 2294) or Leonora 863 6089 or Sally or Kate 427 9201.

Prisoner's Wives

Maggie Tuttle of the Prisoner's Wives Union rang to say they are organising a demonstration, 'In protest against the treatment prisoner's wives have to suffer' and hope for support from Women's Liberation.

The demonstration will begin at 12 noon on June 12, 1974 from Trafalgar Square onto Buckingham Palace, and then the Home Office. There will be a float, presenting women behind bars, and prisoners' wives and families from all parts of the country. If you would like to come and need help with transport to London, contact the PWU at 216 Hornsey Road, London N.7.

Norwich Women's Refuge

This is a new centre similar to other Women's Aids, but they have given themselves a different name since they are not as financially independent as others (Norwich local authority have agreed to lease a house and to give them a small grant to help in the first months). There is a small management group of women meeting weekly to decide external relations with local authority, lawyers etc., and the internal organisation of the house is left to the women who use it. Anybody interested in helping should contact Elizabeth Edwards, 12 Mount Pleasant, Norwich NOR 79E (Tel: 51860)

Aware - Action for Women's Advice, Research and Education
Aware have set up a Health Collective, whose aims are 1) to research into women's experiences with doctors and

doctors' attitudes to women, to analyse and publicise these findings, and 2) as an on-going concern, to push feminist views at every level as much as possible: for instance, although contraceptive services on the NHS would seem to be a good thing, women - for whom these services exist - are not involved in decisions regarding these services, except in the few cases where women represent the professions.

They are mainly based in London but hope anyone interested in joining them will be able to participate fully in their work. They particularly need keen interviewers and help in campaigning for a health service for women. They can be contacted c/o 7 The Priory, Priory Park, London SE3; tel. 852 5785 (Jill Rakusen) or 733 2832 (Helen Lewis-Jones)

Aware - The Archives

Collective, concerned with the collection and storage of information, has recently lost some members, due to circumstances beyond their control. They urgently need replacements.

They would welcome any calls, queries, visits etc and particularly offers of help. Contact Jane Hustwit, 802 7763 (home) or 980 4422 ext. 85 or write to 18a Ferndale Road, London N15.

The Worcester/Malvern Study Group are holding a talk/film/discussion on Women At Work in the Main Hall at the Technical College, Deansway, Worcester on Friday, May 3, 1974 at 7.30 p.m. Speakers - Sarah Boston (in W.L.M., journalist and film-director currently writing a book on women working) 'Working Women'. Irene Smallbone (Birmingham post office worker) 'Women post office workers struggle for equal working conditions'. Patricia Hewitt (NCCL Women's Rights Officer, Organizer of Age Concern) 'Women's pensions and the need for a strong Anti-Discrimination Bill'. Film: Women Fight the Bill.

exhibitions



Women's Workshop of the Artists Union

The Workshop will now be exhibiting at Essex University through May.

Women Seen by Women

The Half Moon Gallery, 27 Alie Street, London E1, is holding a women's photography exhibition from May 9th - June 2nd. The purpose of this exhibition is to consider photographs taken by women, and by doing so re-evaluate some of the ways women are portrayed by men. More specifically they wish to explore women's views of and reactions to their own sex. They hope that the exhibition will provoke responses to certain questions which inevitably arise. Is there a woman's art? Or in other words can the sex of the



Sally Greenhill

photographer be identified through her photographs? Are certain sensibilities uniquely feminine? How much are women's unique experiences reflected in their work? Certainly the sex of the viewer is an important factor in the way in which he or she responds to any photograph but equally we must not ignore the photographer's sex or we may be in danger of robbing work of its richness.

In order that the scope of the exhibition is very broad and covers the subject from every viewpoint they have contacted as many photographers as possible. These include Dorothy Bohm, Fay Godwin, Sally Greenhill, Margaret Murray, Angela Phillips, Tricia Porter, Claire Schwob, Valerie Wilmer and Bunnie Brissett.

Margaret Murray

Su Braden

Why do people go to galleries? What do they expect? How do they behave? Are they conditioned to play a certain role - to 'appreciate', 'interpret'? How free do they feel to react? How far do the conditions and situation control them? How are Vietnam, Northern Ireland or Ethiopia made palatable for our sitting rooms? How do art galleries and the art world contribute to our inability to react?

During the week approximately 45 people have been invited to come to the gallery, one half of which will be partitioned by a thin screen from the rest of the area. They will come in twos and threes bringing with them their normal work for that particular time of day or day of the week. The activities, conversations or sounds of this group will be relayed by four industrial cameras working on rotation to a monitor in the 'public' half of the gallery.

From time to time throughout the day I will draw references between the 'participants' and the 'spectators' in the gallery. Conclusions must be unpredictable but the conditions will be those of a workshop rather than an exhibition.

At Royal College of Art Gallery Kensington Gore London SW7 (584 5020 ex 352)

Open 11am to 5pm Monday through Friday, from 29 April to 3 May

Feminist Art Exhibition

The Feminist Art Exhibition will be taking place in June 1974, at Sussex University. For further information and/or sending-in forms please write to Pen Dalton, 31 Park St, Brighton BN2 2BS, Sussex or ring 0273-685431. It is now possible to show work in any medium.

performances

To Die Among Friends

Micheline Wandor's plays, reviewed in this issue, will be performed by the Paradise Foundry on the following days:

May 5 & 6 at Oval House, 10.15 pm

May 8, 9, 10, 11 at the Gulbenkian Studios, Hull.

May 13, 14, 15, 16 at the Gardener Art Centre, Brighton.

For further dates contact the Paradise Foundry, 24 Noel Street, London W1.

Words Of Advice by Fay Weldon.

One of the nicest things about going to the Orange Tree Fringe Theatre in Richmond was that I did not feel that I had gone into a theatre to watch a play. It was like walking into another room in my own flat. The play was specially written for the Orange Tree by Fay Weldon, and is about the typical marriage breakdown of a young school teacher Tammy and his stay at home wife, Julia. Their respective relations offer their advice, which only increases the confusion because it is the classic cop out, each telling them to be the opposite of what they themselves are. The play is totally frustrating because nothing is resolved, but we can all laugh, because it is the easiest way to deaden the pain. JS

The Way We Were

Streisand & Redford

Behind the slush, the glamour, the two stars, the nostalgia of this film lies a profoundly depressing message about men and women's capacity to relate. Barbara Streisand plays Katie, a political activist from a poor Jewish background with a direct and unconventional personality. Robert Redford plays Hubbell, blue-eyed athlete, rich socialite with literary talent. They eye each other at college from opposite sides of the social and political spectrum. They meet up again during the war, she admires his writing, they fall in love, marry, have a child and divorce.

The depressing thing is that one feels that a relationship between such a woman and such a man is doomed to fail, but it might succeed if the roles had been reversed. She is drawn to him for his looks and general attractiveness, but in the end, he cannot stand her intense commitment to principles and ideas, or her intolerance of his socialite and decadent friends in New York and Hollywood. He undermines everything that makes her such a forceful personality. The conflict between the two personalities is heightened by the fact that the more interesting and stronger personality is the woman's.

If Katie conflicts with the stereotype, most of the other women in the film conform. Mary Anne the college girlfriend of Hubbell, subsequent wife of his best friend and partner in a casual affair is vapid, pretty and

appearing with coffee cup, endless meals, and a blind belief in his talent.

The film has an eye to current questions of women's liberation. No doubt sexual politics would have been too explicit and so the story is set in historical times 1935-55 - Spanish War, WWII and McCarthy, but the message comes out loud and clear. Dynamic, independent, thinking women are great - but hell to live with. The poignant waste of these two people's love for each other has a lot to do with stereotypes of relationships between the sexes, but the film-makers seem to come down heavily on the side of the old order.

Griselda Pollock.

publications

Virago

Virago is a feminist publishing imprint being launched in May, 1975. It will publish books by women for women - exclusively. Virago was formed to create a niche in publishing for women writers whose work might otherwise get unsympathetic treatment, little promotion and less distribution. It is a subsidiary of Quartet Books which has the facilities of a mass market publishing house. If you have got an idea for a book you'd like to show, please get in touch with Carmen Callil, 27 Smith Street, London, SW3, tel: 352-6634 or Andrea Adam, 54 Drayton Gardens, SW10, telephone evenings 373-9449.



Dorothy Bohm, photographed in Ticino, Switzerland

undemanding. After she has left her husband he remarks to Hubbell, that it's not like losing a 'person'. One of the most sympathetic characters in the film, an older German woman, confidante of Katie's is dismissed as 'probably a dyke'. Even Katie has to conform more or less to the conventional standards of beauty - even if she is not pretty, she has a good figure, dresses stylishly and by the time Hubbell meets her again, her once frizzy hair is neatly ironed smooth and glossy. As he falls in love with her the fire light casts a romantic glow over her features and he finds her 'beautiful'. She abandons some of her independence when with him,

Women and Literature - An Annotated bibliography of Women Writers.

An excellent bibliography of twentieth century female authors produced by the Sense and Sensibility Collective, Cambridge, Massachusetts. It deals exclusively with fiction which can be studied from a feminist viewpoint, and a short list of writers before the Twentieth Century, and works about Literature. Each entry gives a brief description of the work of each particular author, and a short biography of the more major writers, plus an index of topics and themes in the listed works.

The Baby Killer

This report shows how the powdered milk companies promote the sale of baby milks to communities in developing countries which cannot use them properly - because of poor or non-existent home hygiene, inadequate nutritional knowledge, illiteracy and poverty - thus causing further malnutrition and disease. The purpose of the report is to alert public opinion to the dangers of some of the sales practices and policies of the baby milk companies, and thus exert pressure on the British Government and governments of developing countries and the medical professions to do something. Price 35p (plus 5p postage) from War on Want, 467 Caledonian Rd, London N.7 9BE.

An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Dirty Words.

The Feminist Writers Workshop of Chicago have produced this dictionary in an effort to show just how debasing the English language is when it refers to women. Drawing from dictionaries and thesauruses they find that the masculine form of classification is always primary the feminine always degrading. For example grandmotherly is described as "having the characteristics conventionally attributed to a grandmother; specif: (a) kindly, indulgent; (b) fussy, interfering. (Webster's NTC, 1960) Grandfatherly: of, relating to, or befitting a grandfather (an eminently human person of grandfatherly years - Lewis Nichols); benignant old and venerable. (Webster's TNL, 1966)." Similarly most words describing women in which there is any hint of sexuality immediately imply prostitution. Published by Loop Centre, YWCA, 37 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Librarians for Social Change

LfSC Feminist Group have put out a journal about women and librarianship. It contains articles about the problems of working in libraries, and discusses means of consciousness raising by displays and other means. They would like to encourage librarians to stock books and periodicals on women and the movement, and avoid sexist bias in selection, catalogue headings etc. The issue also contains surveys of articles about librarianship in other countries. Can be obtained from John Noyce, 67 Vere Rd, Brighton, Sussex.

They also want to have a weekend conference for all people interested in LfSC - possibility of limited accommodation for people in need and sleeping bags, with one day for special groups and one day for everyone else. Provisional date: July 20-21. Info from Chrissy Allot, 143 Highbury New Park, London, N.5 (s.a.e.)

Hull Woman

Hull Women's Liberation Group have produced the first issue of a magazine - Hull Woman. It contains the story about The Dispute at the Gainsborough Fish Restaurant, Hull Women's Aid Centre, a personal story about being a battered housewife, etc. They would like contributions, comments, letters and are particularly interested in hearing from or about working women who are not in unions. Contact Claire Bertschinger, Owltree Cottage, Rectory Rd, Ross, Hull.

Survival Scrapbook 3½:

"Plays, Ways and Means"

by Pauline Vincent and Ann Wynn. Unicorn Bookshop Publication, from Books, 84 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 8AB

The latest in this series of survival scrapbooks intended to present alternatives to the plastic society. Written by two art lecturers from the FROEBEL Institute. "PLAY is for kids, parents, teachers, anybody. It's a book for rainy days or for long nights, with a lot of ideas for making things or changing things ... to make them beautiful ... to make them useful ... or just to have fun ..."

It's a book to explore, to use when the mood takes you, not just to read. It is laid out like a treasure trail. You have to discover the information for yourself, tucked up in corners, curling round drawings, scattered over pages. If you want straight information or step by step details, you will be frustrated and your eyes exhausted by the crowded blue drawings and writing, the seemingly haphazard lay-out and the lack of precise details.

After a while, letting your eyes wander over the pages, it is like seeing one's mind rambling round a subject. How to link two things together leads on to seeing drawings of knitting, two hands joined, nuts and bolts, glue, macrame, bundles of corn in a haystack ... and so on. Then there are pages on covering surfaces: paint, drawing, printing; on transformation of basic materials by cutting, sewing, dyeing or modeling. There's a fascinating section on making your own pigments and digging your own clay. Then one gets into discovering and altering space with cardboard dividers enclosures, tents or making structures out of sapling branches and sacking.. an endless stream of stimulating thoughts, ideas and information.

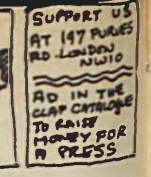
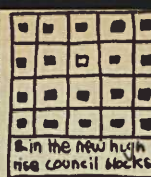
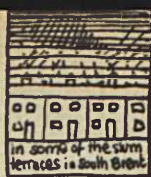
Throughout all the pages, addresses of stockists and very useful tips are sprinkled amongst the diagrams and writing. This does not make for easy reading or reference, but, no doubt, is all intended to be part of the process of 'discovery'.

A book for anyone who enjoys playing and creating, but use it with patience and curiosity or you will miss most of it.

Stephanie Gilbert.

Spare Parts: printing addresses

ROTAPRINT Ltd. Honeypt Lane, London NW9 9RM. Tel: 01-204.3355.
ADDRESSOGRAPH MULTIGRAPH. Aldwych House Aldwych, London WC2. Tel: 01-404.5751
A.B.DICK. 3 Warple Way, Acton, London W3 8EH. Tel: 01-743.8066
GESTETNER. Gestetner House, 210 Euston Road, London NW1. Tel: 01-387.7021.
Printing Outfit, 2 Gloucester Street, BRISTOL. Tel: Brighton 65706.
Falling Wall Press. 79 Richmond Road, Montpellier, BRISTOL 6. Tel: 0272-422116.
Moss Side Press. 136 Withington Road, MANCHESTER 16. Tel: 061-226-3458.
LIVERPOOL Free Press. 83 Seel Street, Liverpool 1.
Just Words, c/o SCM, 69 College Road, BIRMINGHAM 13. Tel: 021-777-1296.
Rochdale Alternative Press, 230 Spotland Road, ROCHDALE, Lancs.
Peoples Paper, 108 Salisbury Rd, Cathays CARDIFF (No press yet, trying to get one)
Aberdeen Peoples Press, 10 Rubislaw Den South, ABERDEEN AB2 6BB. Tel: AB.321857
Inside Out, 49 Meadowside, DUNDEE. Tel: Dundee 22940 or 643367.



printing: off-set litho

and here it is..
the final instalment on printing
your own: some information to
help you set up your own press.

choosing a machine

Work out exactly what you will need from the machine - as, whatever it is, there will be a machine specially for it.. ie: size of image area you want, fine registration (for colour) fine reproduction (for photos), is speed important, and quick colour change..? NB: The more rollers, the better the inking system. Suction feed will waste less paper than friction feed and you get better registration (the cost of paper becoming such that this is important)

Contact as many friendly printers, community presses that you can for specific tips and advice. (see end of article for addresses of community presses outside of London) Find out about local dealers, and, especially, helpful mechanics who have been known to supply good bargains.

borrowing

In your area there will be a number of off-set machines to be found in: Art schools, student unions, Institutes, Youth centres.. Well worth spending a bit of time locating them. Some might just be sympathetic to your 'cause' and offer to help print.

money

If you haven't got any, think about combining with other local groups/organizations to buy cooperatively. Alternatively try to raise it yourself, or apply to charities (London people see CLAP catalogue -community levy for alternative projects- from Rising Free bookshop) or trusts (esp Rowntrees)

New machines

For most small presses not over concerned with high class multi-colour production, second hand machines are what you want. However, to give some idea of costs and types available, these are some of the machines produced by four of the main companies.

Rotaprint

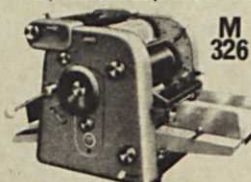
Very large company, all sizes of machines. Totally comprehensive back up, produce all their own supplies (inks, plates, chemicals..) and plate making service; large detailed operating manuals and free training scheme. At least 50% of their sales are 'in-plants' (not printers) therefore they are used to helping people to set up. Maintenance contracts offered on new machines (and usually on 2nd hand ones)

Prices vary according to where you live and type of machine. All give quarterly calls: on TTR..£24 to £32, on R30/90: £39 to £47 a year. Mechanics calls are £3.50 hr, + expenses Rotaprint probably have the largest range of off-set litho machines, from £950 up to £14000.. The most widely used in small presses is the R30/90, which is the cheapest and best for its type, and the size it can print.

TTR: Table top, friction feed, image area 13 X 9 1/2...cost £950
RA3: standing, suction feed, special for large area of line/text. Image area: 16 1/2 x 10 1/2...cost £2795
R30/90: Very versatile machine, designed for quick set up and change. Image area 13 x 17 1/2.....£3225
R3850. In 'superfeed' series. Designed for straightforward material, fast, can also cope with fine register. image area 14 1/2 x 19.....£4500.

A.B.Dick

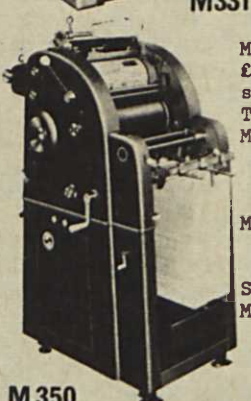
They specialise in smaller machines, especially the table tops, and were very friendly and helpful.



M326



M331



M350

All their machines are fitted with self-compensating rollers to allow for paper weight variations. They have a process dept. for plate making, helping with art work ect. Maintenance contracts & guarantees are the same for new and 2nd hand models: 4 calls a year is £56 on the M326. £65 on the M350. Mechanics calls are £3.50 hr, 24hr service.

Table Top:
M326: Friction feed, 9 ink rollers, image area 9 1/2 x 13' cost...£825.

M331: same as above, but image area is 17 1/2 x 13,...£1450.

Standing:
M350: Suction feed, 12 ink rollers, deep feed for more paper, image: 9 1/2 x 13"£1895.

Addressograph Multigraph

Of particular interest is their Customer Relations Service. If at any time after buying a machine, you are

having operating problems (not mechanical fault) they will send someone to help (no cost). The one week training scheme is included in cost of machine. Maintenance contract is £120 a year. Mechanics calls are £4.50 hr. (Probably cheaper to skip the contract and call in the mechanic regularly for service)

Most well known is their MODEL 1250 HS. which has been developed and streamlined over the years. (Old ones still very good buys) The BASIC COST £2050, but is designed to have extra parts fitted at a later stage when required.

Image area: 10 3/8ths x 13 inches. can be extended to 10 3/8 x 16 1/2" with extra cylinders. Suction feed redesigned to take paper from air-mail to thin card.

They also do a good Table Top model, M125. for £1000. image area: 8" x 12 1/2".

Gestetner

Very big company, perhaps too big to be interested in small groups wanting cheap presses. Not very helpful, but maybe the Rep was having a bad day...

Maintenance contract on new and rebuilds (if bought from them) Quarterly calls and all intermittent calls at half rate, cost depends on where you live: M210: £41 to £49. M211: £54 to £62.

Mechanics calls £5 hr + his expenses.

M21C: standing model, friction feed, image area: 13 1/2 x 9 3/4trs" Basic cost: £1280.

M211: Standing larger type, suction feed, a number of added attachments, more rollers etc. better print possibilities than the M210. image area 13 1/2 x 9 3/4. Basic cost: £2460.

Second - hand

Most firms and dealers prefer to call them: reconditioned, rebuilt, demonstration models or 'trade-ins'. It is all much the same thing, dependant on how much work has been done on the machine before resale.

There are four main sources:

- EXCHANGE AND MART
- INTER-SALES, between groups or offices.
- DEALERS.
- MANUFACTURERS.

The most important aspect of getting a 2nd hand machine is the after-care. ie: guarantee, service, maintenance contract, and availability of spare parts.

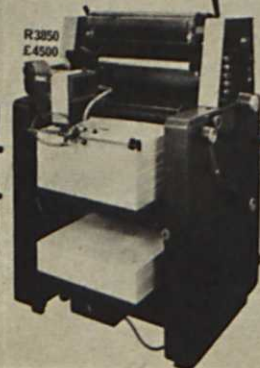
The cheapest and most unpredictable source is Exchange & Mart. You will find the most amazing ads such as: Rotaprint 30/90..£850.... (new: £3225) Multilith 1250..new parts fitted £190. (New it is £2050)



TTR £950



R30/90 £3225



R3850 £4500



Copylyn camera £337

Good source for guillotines, plate-makers & duplicators, BUT, approach all these with extreme caution and a knowledgeable friend/printer at your side who can thoroughly check machine for worn parts, damaged rollers etc.. Always ensure that you get the OPERATING MANUAL. Some of these ads are private sales, in which case there will be no guarantee or follow up service, but a good bargain can be found. All the four main manufacturers mentioned here do NOT offer maintenance contracts on machines unless they are bought direct from them.

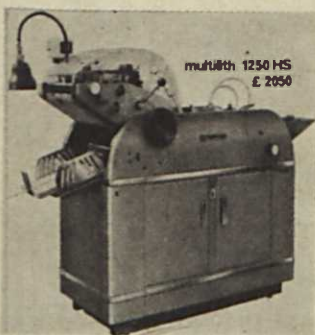
INTER SALES between businesses/organizations have the same problems relating to guarantees and after sale maintenance but those bought from large firms are likely to have been well looked after, and regularly serviced so are worth looking out for.

DEALERS.

There is a whole world of dealers in 2nd hand print equipment. Many of the Exchange and Mart ads are from dealers, but for reasons of service it is best to buy locally if possible.

NOT ONLY MUST YOU BE ABLE TO CHECK THE MACHINE, BUT ALSO THE DEALER HIMSELF.

: Does he offer any guarantee or maintenance contract. Will he service the machine on call, how quickly? Are all the spare parts available, has he got the spare part manual for that machine? If possible contact past clients to check up, and also check if the manufacturer has a nearby branch and would send their mechanics. Compare costs of calls. Repairs & mechanics are expensive, so a cheap machine can end up costing twice as much in repairs etc.



MANUFACTURERS.

All four dealt with here sell some form of 2nd hand machine. Prices range from 2/3rds to 4/5ths of new price, but all firms stressed that they do not have that many to offer. Generally all machines are covered by same guarantee and service that is offered on new machines.

ROTAPRINT

From 2/3rds to 4/5ths cost of new machine of same type. Only 1% of their sales are reconditioned machines. They are completely stripped and old parts replaced. Buyers of these machines are able to make use of the free training scheme, in most cases ie: one the larger models.

ADDRESSOGRAPH MULTIGRAPH Ltd.

Around 3/4 cost of new machine. Machines are factory rebuilt, virtually new, coming under same guarantee and service as new machine. In some cases additional new components might not be able to be fitted to old model.

A.B.DICK

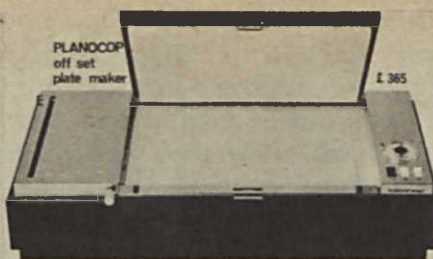
'Rebuilt machines' about 2/3rds cost. Machines completely stripped and overhauled. Same service as new machine.

GESTETNER.

Cost 4/5ths of new price. Stressed that they don't have that many, they are mainly ex-demonstration models. Same guarantee and service.

training courses

I have not been on any of these courses so cannot vouch for their usefulness. However, these machines are complex so it would seem sensible to make use of



them; especially on the larger models, and with Rotaprint and Addressograph who include cost of course in machine price. In a few days, however intensive the training, you can learn a certain amount but don't expect to come away fully trained. It takes years to develop a sympathy with a machine and learn to operate it perfectly.

ADDRESSOGRAPH MULTIGRAPH recognize this, and, as well as their one week course (incl in cost of machine) they run a CUSTOMER RELATION SERVICE to help their clients with operating problems (free)

ROTAPRINT also include cost of one week course in the price. In some cases, on the larger models, they will send someone to train you at your base. (I have heard that this takes some persuading..)

A.B.DICK charge £3 a day, 3 days on the table top machines, and a week on the larger machines. Course includes theory of litho, films, operating, colour work, care of sundries (plates), plate making.. ect.

GESTETNER charge £5 a day, course runs from 2 to 5 days.

making the plate

The plates, or 'masters' of your image to be printed can be made in a variety of ways, depending on type of art work (text, line drawings, photos) and No of copies to be made. Three main types: Coated paper/plastic, or pre-sensitized aluminium. All come in different weights: light, standard or heavy duty.

paper masters

These are normally imaged by hand with a special ink accepting medium: litho reproducing wax crayon, or drawing fluid. or typed with a special lithographic typewriter ribbon. With care (no finger prints ect.) and used imaginatively they can produce very good masters. Usually for runs up to max 2500. After imaging plate must be fixed.

aluminium masters

DIRECT CONTACT (diffusion transfer process) For these your art work has to be exactly right size and how you want it, as no touching up or alterations can be successfully made afterwards. Direct contact between your art work and a negative paper is made with a printing down vacuum frame or a diffusion transfer machine. The negative is then exposed onto the presensitized plate. This then has to be developed and fixed. For photos, a half-tone screen is interposed between art work and negative. The advantage of the 'all-in' machine is that developing takes place in it, and special feed rollers & grips ensure exact registration of negative to plate. With just a printing down frame, you then need to buy an automatic developer for plates, or to do it in your own tanks (getting registration right with this is difficult)

PHOTOGRAPHIC

By use of a PROCESS CAMERA. For very high quality, needle sharp images, and for enlarging & reducing art work. You make a negative which can then be played around with, touched up and altered. For good quality photo reproduction this is essential. They are very expensive machines. New: from £400 up to £4000 (for a machine that automatically processes) However all manufacturers will make plates for you, or there are innumerable firms that specialise in it.

maintenance & repair

There is a dilemma..

Many presses I visited expressed the desire to not only print for different groups in the area, but also to help and train them to print their own. The only press I saw where this actually happened was in appalling condition; the print was virtually illegible, registration was off, and there was a costly amount of paper wasted through bad inking and feeding. Wear and tear on the machine through constant misuse

had seriously damaged it. Although politically and socially the aim to help people to print their own, is very honourable, with a large sensitive, and costly machine, it is not very practicable. Printers are possessive about their machines for a good reason. One machine is best used by one operator who can concentrate her time on getting to know the intricacies, foibles and short cuts of the machine - who can keep it in perfect condition, get to know it intimately and hence get the best from it. This is even more important if the machine is 2nd hand to start with.

AVOID REPAIRS by constant maintenance & use the operating manual

These manuals are very comprehensive and essential reading. Always make sure you get one with the machine.

MECHANICS. Cultivate them carefully..

A good one will show you what's gone wrong and how he's putting it right.. Others will come in, fiddle around and shoot off leaving you with no information and a large bill..

SPARE PARTS. The catalogues of these are like gold dust, as most manufacturers only issue them to their own mechanics. This is to prevent enterprising metal workers from setting up own workshops.. If buying an old machine, check parts are still available.

a Strip Printer



Perhaps an expensive luxury to the small press, but this photo composing machine cuts down the hours of frustrating letraseting. It is simple and delightful to use, gives very professional headings & doesn't need a dark room; subdued lighting will do.. A cassette of photo-lettering paper is in machine, rolling through the exposure window. A film fount of letters is fed through window. This moves back & forth exposing the type onto the photopaper. Your head-line is developed manually in lightproof jars & is immediately ready for pasting up. Over 200 different type founts, virtually indestructible, about £3.30 each. The cost of machine, £215, includes 10 type founts, 30 metre roll of 35mm photo paper chemicals, operator manual, fount storage cases & other bits & pieces. A number of schools, institutes and Art colleges are known to use them, it might be worth trying to get to use theirs..

CASLON

CASLON LIMITED
30 AYLESBURY STREET LONDON EC1
TELEPHONE 01-263 4023

'how to print'

A new booklet aimed at helping alternative/community presses set up, and cope with their machines. Good tips on care, service, cultivating your mechanic and operating advice. Available early May, from: RISING FREE, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1.. Tel 01-837-0182. (about 25p +p&p. Phone RF first)

In a society which lays so much stress on motherhood and fertility, unwillingly childless couples deserve sympathy. Society has allowed them to fill the gap in their lives by a redistribution of children from those women who did not want to be pregnant to those who would like to have been. But is this the answer? Childcare in our society is based on ownership. Parental rights are almost unlimited, children's rights are nil. In the Matabele culture orphans don't exist and adoption is unnecessary - childcare is communal. Maybe we should follow their example.

Carol Burns wrote this article which she entitled 'chosen children.' It is about her experience in adopting two children. I've tried to clarify the legal issues in her story and to indicate where the law is likely to be changed when Dr. Owens' Childrens Bill, based on a departmental committee report on adoption, becomes law - as it almost certainly will.

adoption

Adoption

In 1964 Alan and I decided to adopt a baby as we had not conceived one. We wrote to Dorset County Council and a children's officer visited us. It didn't matter that we lived in a primitive cottage without running water or electricity or that our incomes as writers were irregular. Our Visitor was 'intoxicated' with the view and forgot to ask our names and ages. Then came the key question. 'Religion?' 'Jewish backgrounds but we're Agnostics.' The children's officer laid down her pen, her face fell. She was certain that our religion, or rather lack of it on paper, eliminated our chances of adopting a child through her council.

◀ The natural mother can stipulate the future religion of her child. She can also ask for her child to be placed in a family with other children. (If the new Children's Bill goes through Parliament these rights will be withdrawn). Local councils may not themselves discriminate on religious grounds though private agencies may. Adoption Agencies and local authorities are required to carry out investigations of adoptive parents.

Unless you are a relative of the child you must be:
married,
under forty years old,
one of you must be at least twenty-five years old (twenty-one, with the new Bill).
healthy and able to provide for the children materially.

Danny (6 weeks)

First time around we were lucky. We were notified of a boy of five weeks with a Jewish

mother and Persian father, both students. The Dorset Council liked to match the intellectual backgrounds of natural and adoptive parents. In their eyes we were a 'perfect match'. A feeling of relief gave way to migraine. I prepared for the baby's arrival, knitted a cardigan and bought a pram. Waiting was unnerving. The baby had to be six weeks before we could have him. I dreamed he was almost given to me, then taken away. We had mutual concerns and doubts. Would he be happy with us? Would his mother want him back? Could I continue writing? Could I cope with the feeding and nappy routine? I felt I was stealing the girl's baby and wanted to visit her and persuade her to keep him. I was told her Orthodox background made it impossible. We went to see him at a foster home. He was smaller than I had expected with dark eyes and curly brown hair. He smelt of a strange house and baby powder. He had a dummy which, when removed, left his lips compressed in an unnatural state. I cried when I held him. Back in our hotel room I was sick in the sink. We collected him the next day.

◀ For the first three months a court will appoint a 'guardian ad litem' who discusses the adoption with all concerned and makes sure that the natural mother has fully made up her mind. During this time a social worker will visit the adoptive family.

You must write to inform the council if you are looking after a child you wish to adopt. (Unless one of you is the natural parent.)

The adoptive parents can keep their identity secret from the natural mother and neither side is obliged to meet the other.

The First Three Months

I learnt to feed him with the help of Spock and a district nurse. A sympathetic children's officer suggested I hold him close to me, but he seemed apart. (Natural mothers often experience initial difficulties breast feeding). Gradually I learnt to nurse him so that I felt I had given birth to him. We changed his name to Daniel because it suited him. He slept at night, ate well, cried rarely. I had been so bound up with my feelings that I had forgotten Alan's; I was pleased to see how gentle he was with him.

The adoption order went through smoothly. His mother was not able to take him back so we did not experience the fears other prospective adopters are known to feel.

◀ During the first three months the natural mother is free to change her mind about the adoption. Then she is required to sign a consent form. In exceptional circumstances an adoption order can go through without the mother's signature.) The adoptive parents must appear in court where, if all has gone smoothly, an adoption order will be granted. The court can make an interim order allowing the child to be kept for two years if they are not satisfied with the application. It is possible to reapply for adoption up until two months before the order expires.

Shopping around

In October 1966, when Danny was two, we moved to a bungalow in Somerset and applied to both councils for a child. We stated in our application forms we would consider an older

child or a young baby, also a child of mixed race. We ran into difficulties. A specialist wrote to us from Essex suggesting a possible child of 'mixed race but not unintelligent'. This was our first experience of prejudice. He or she did not materialise. The Dorset Council could not find 'a suitable child' with a similar intellectual background to Danny's. We were criticised for 'shopping around' but we were concerned with the widening age gap between first and second child. Our Jewish backgrounds seemed the main snag. Agnostic friends with Christian backgrounds found two coloured children quite quickly.

In 1967 we wrote to a dozen London councils and answered New Statesman advertisements. The Agnostics Adoption Society had no available children. A clergyman seeking homes for Vietnamese children ruled us out on religious grounds. We were rejected as parents for a West Indian boy. On one occasion we decided a boy was too near in age to Danny. In desperation we agreed to foster an older French girl. Dorset Council advised against it. They thought fostering would be bad for Danny; having lost his mother, he ought not to gain then lose a sister.

A letter in the Guardian from a Ms. Pavey described the difficulties of adopting coloured children and the problems of Jewish would-be adopters. We wrote to her and she put us in touch with a council who turned us down on the grounds that their children were not 'intellectually your equals'. We disagreed with the official theories of inherited intelligence, believing a child's development to be mainly determined by a good environment.

Report of the Departmental Committee on the Adoption of Children:

Children have been handicapped by the family's history and have not been considered for adoption for this reason. Advances in knowledge indicate that some adverse factors in parental histories, eg. criminality, promiscuity or certain types of mental illness and mental subnormality may have no genetic relevance in the future development of the child. It looks as though official opinion is tipping in the direction of 'nurture', rather than 'nature'.

Rejection

Then the Dorset Council offered us a partly-Jewish girl. I began knitting. When the baby was placed in my arms in a white shawl I did not take to her. She had pretty blue eyes and fair hair. It was like racialism in reverse, I felt ashamed. The children's officers were extremely considerate. I couldn't take the baby home as I was worried about my initial reaction. Danny had set a precedent in that I had taken to him immediately. After this experience I doubted whether we should apply for a second child. I was disappointed I still had not conceived after Danny's adoption and also another baby would be a strain on our finances. But, as we disliked the idea of a single child family, we wrote to Ms. Pavey again.

Shamim (18 months)

In August 1967 Ms Pavey gave us the number of a doctor who was privately representing the mother of an Indian child. At one and a half, she was fourteen months younger than Danny. The Dorset Council considered her 'a good match' because her mother was a teacher.

I anticipated a cross-examination of our reasons for wishing to adopt an Indian child. Our Agnostic friends had had their 'philanthropic motives' questioned. But we were warmly greeted by the doctor and shown into a garden where Shamim sat on a tricycle. She wore a spotted nylon party dress, red shoes and had long hair scraped back in a bow. There was a scar on her cheek as she had fallen off a swing. She was overweight and scowled. Instant love was not forthcoming and again I FELT SICK. She fell and when I went to help her she frowned. She dragged at purple border flowers and shredded them. Danny was sorting stones in a tin. He dropped one and she picked it up for him, giggling. I realised I could grow to love her and imagined her in the clothes I would buy for her. Her black eyes were full of fear. I wondered if her weight was due to her being compensated with cakes. She had been moved from mother to foster parents, to would-be adopters and back to mother. The depression in her face made it difficult to make a decision.

◀ If the new law goes through, private, (third party) adoptions will be banned, unless the child is a relative and has been in the care of adoptive parents for at least a year. All other adoptions will have to go through the council or a registered adoption agency. This is intended to 'give adequate safeguards for the welfare of the child'. The committee felt that the vetting and post adoption guidance was a vital part of the work of agencies and where it was not available the children suffered.

It should also halt the growth of the black market in babies. It is illegal to charge for finding a child for adoption but with no control over third party adoptions this has been happening. Some doctors have been paying women to go through with a pregnancy rather than have an abortion.

The doctor explained he didn't want Shamim's mother to be kept waiting; I felt pressurised by the situation.

The next day we took Shamim to a restaurant. She wore another party dress, she did not glower or smile. It would take time to interpret the shadows which passed over her face. She larked about with Danny. I held her hand in the street and realised I had a daughter. We arrived early the next day to pick her up and saw Shamim's mother in the street. She was running in the rain trying to shelter under the trees. She was lithe and beautiful and the sight of her running as from herself, after leaving Shamim is something I'll always remember. I was given a scribbled list of Shamim's food preferences and sleeping habits. She had a suit-case full of hand-made clothes, a cloth doll, a teddy and a push chair. She responded when I kissed her but stood alone watching goldfish. In the car she cried bitterly, hid her face in me and said 'Mummy'.

At first Shamim wet her bed, woke in the night screaming and was obsessed by food. Her fingers twitched like a young baby's when she saw it. I later learnt that losing her mother had made her feel she might starve. She was frightened of dogs and spiders. She sat in one position for hours playing with her doll. There was a high edge to her laughter and, if upset, she didn't cry but pulled at her nails. She spoke little and easily lost her balance. She was mourning the loss of her mother.

My parents helped the children become friends. I explained to Danny why we were adopting Shamim, which led to questions about

his origins which I answered as truthfully as possible. The greatest fear of an adoptive child is that he or she will be given away again. Shamim's 'good' behaviour hid this fear. Later she felt secure enough to exhibit rather than repress 'naughty' behaviour and still feel loved.

I was under great strain at first which suggests that an adoptive mother shows a similar depression to a natural mother adapting to a baby. I had a fully formed personality to adjust to. I was helped by a perceptive children's officer who acted as 'a mirror' and allowed me to talk. I never felt on trial during those three months but it was a relief when Shamim's mother signed the consent form and the adoption went through.

Child Guidance Clinic

A set-back occurred when we came to London and the children started school. Shamim resented being left and felt disoriented. She lost things and stole sweets. Talking didn't help and punishment aggravated the situation. I contacted the local Child Guidance Clinic. Both Shamim and I needed help. Using play therapy, Shamim acted out her confused feelings about her lost mother and her attitude to us. I discussed the regret I felt at having missed her babyhood and my feelings of inadequacy. The treatment was invaluable. Shamim is a changed child. There is a mutual trust which produces confidence on both sides.

◀ The adoption report emphasises the unique problems of adoption. Adopted children do not have the ultimate security of a blood tie. They have little knowledge of their origins and are more open to feelings of insecurity at difficult periods of their lives. The report recommends that adopted children should be given information about their natural parents and backgrounds to give them a sense of identity.

Real Parents

I used to feel we could never replace their real parents. Now I know 'real' means 'really there' and not a fantasy because of a blood tie. People often refer to adopted children as 'not your own'. Once you look after and love a child he or she is as much 'yours' as if a blood tie existed. Adoptive parents are advised to tell children they were 'chosen' to compensate for feelings of being unwanted. The children enjoy hearing stories of how we found them. We have yet to face the problems of 'rejections' in adolescence and the fact they may want to contact their natural parents.

◀ The new law will make it much easier for adopted children to discover who their natural mother is and therefore, make it easier to contact her. This is an improvement in the rights of children but perhaps it will be an additional factor in making women opt for abortion. It is bad enough to have to carry an unwanted child through to term without the additional worry of having that child turn up again twenty years afterwards. Women have children adopted because society is too unloving and unsupportive to help them bring these children up.

Many of them want only to forget the experience. In a society which ostracises 'unmarried mothers' the balance between the rights of mother and child need careful consideration and sensitive handling. I shall look further into Dr Owen's Children's Bill in the next issue. A new framework to ensure the rights of children is long overdue. Let's hope that this one will improve their situation but not at the expense of their mothers.

Angela Phillips and Carol Burns

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Info...Odds & Sods...A

education

Please could you let me know who to get in touch with about the bricklaying course for women that is run at Letchworth and any others if they exist. I've heard that you originally published details of it in the magazine, but I missed them at the time.

Yours,
Sarah Rogers,
Cambridge

*No, we didn't publish details of any bricklaying courses at Letchworth, but I might be able to help you a bit. Try contacting your local Ministry of Employment for details of bricklaying courses held by the Government Training Scheme. I don't know for sure that they are open to women but it would be interesting to find out.

I do know that Hammersmith School of Art runs a bricklaying course that women are allowed into if they are already in the trade. This probably applies to most Further Education colleges which run bricklaying courses; it would be worth contacting your local Education Authority to find out. Best of luck.

day nurseries

I wonder if you can help me with a practical problem? I have recently started a course in librarianship at a college in Islington. A woman near the college looks after my 6 months old son. But since I live in Lewisham the journey each day is very tiring for me as well as for him. And what is going to happen when I want to study during the vacation or when I begin practical work in Lewisham or Kent?

Needless to say, there is no hope of a day nursery place unless my husband leaves me, and precious

little then. Private nurseries do not take such young children, and baby minders are in short supply. Do you know of any individual or group who may be able to help?

Please can you put me in touch with any Women's Liberation Group in the area, even if they cannot help me with this problem as I feel there is plenty they can help me with. But at the moment the practical problem dominates all else.

Lesley M Reid
London SE13

*I sympathise - I have the same problem. I have sent you the address of your nearest group, and I suggest you discuss it with them. Maybe you will find other women with the same problem with whom you could get together to do exchange baby minding on some sort of rota basis. If you feel more ambitious perhaps you could think about organising crèche facilities yourselves. Unfortunately council funded projects are unlikely to be able to accommodate babies, but you may like to contact the Child Care Centre in North London, which is run by members of Women's Liberation, who may give you some ideas. The address is, 123 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5.

Have any readers living in Lewisham or thereabouts got similar problems? If so, would they like to contact Lesley?

isolation

I write to you in the hope that you will help me out of a dilemma. I am a single woman of thirty four. I'm recovering from a nervous breakdown. I've been rather seriously ill. My mental health has never been particularly good. I'm intelligent but have never felt confident enough to pursue

further education. I've been discharged from hospital on a weeks leave and hope for my final discharge when I return to see my psychiatrist in four days time.

The big problem in my life is loneliness. My mother died four years ago of cancer. I have a brother who visits me. I have difficulty mixing socially with people. I do take life seriously I suppose, too seriously. I feel sexually attracted to my own sex.

Is it possible that you have a reader with problems similar to my own? I feel that I have been a failure so often that the only thing now is for me to be a success. My particular interests are English and English Literature.
Margaret Napier,
Co. Durham.

*I am sending you the address of a Women's Liberation group in your area; it's not particularly close to you but if you write to them they may be able to put you in touch with something more local. Perhaps they could tell you about Gay Women's Groups too. I'm sure you would find being involved in a small group very useful. In addition, why not try a co-counselling group? If you write to John Heron, 40 Denzil Road, Guildford, Surrey, he may be able to suggest a mixed group in your area.

If there are any readers who would like to contact Margaret, their letters will be forwarded to her from Spare Rib.

local groups/ the Movement

As part of my work for the Ordinary National Certificate in Public Administration, I have chosen to do an extended essay on the Women's Liberation Movement, or at least certain

aspects of it. For this essay, I am required to do a certain amount of field work, i.e., interviewing people, participating in some sort of group activity, etc.

I would therefore be obliged if you could send me some addresses of Women's Lib. groups in the Wakefield/Leeds area, or addresses where I may obtain information about the movement.

Karen Jubb,
Yorkshire

*The most useful book for your purposes is *The Body Politic - Women's Liberation in Britain 1969-72*, which you can obtain from Stage One, Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8SD. For other general information, also for lists of groups in your area, write to The Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earham Street, London WC2.

French Women's Liberation

I am doing a dissertation on French Women's Liberation for 'A' Level French. I wonder if you could send me any addresses for French Women's Liberation, i.e., magazines, books, information, etc.

I.S. Everton,
Leeds.

*Write to the new women's centre in Paris for information on the movement in France. The address is 24, Cité Trevisé, Paris 9. You may also be interested in the newsletter that they are producing in English. See also Monique Wittig's book *Les Guerrières* which is obtainable in this country in English and is published by Picador.

Advice...Info...Odds &

OUT OF WORK

How to understand and use Social Security by Phillipa Steele

You're unemployed, and it occurs to you that you've been paying National Insurance over quite a while, and therefore you must be entitled to benefit. Your Government cares for you, after all . . . you ring up the Department of Health and Social Security to find out where to begin.

And so you step into a labyrinth. I started off thinking how simple, just like regular insurance, you pay, you claim . . . but tinkling about in the back of my mind were recollections of my friends having a lot of trouble . . .

You phone. First you do battle with the GPO to get through to the number in the directory. That number tells you that you want a different number and refers you: you try again. The voice starts off with a barrage of questions - how old are you - are you married - or single - have you any children, if so how many and what ages? You explain that all you want to know is . . . ah, well have you registered at your local employment exchange?

Your local exchange is actually not the closest one to you, but entails a journey half way across London. You arrive at a large grim building, pierced at intervals with entrances A,B,C,D, and so on down the alphabet. You choose an entrance at random and look around for directions. 'Register for Employment - Room 10c'. Eventually you enter a dim room punctuated with forbidding looking cubicles and you are given a form, asked to fill it out and wait. Then you discover that you're in the wrong place; you should be registering in Professional and Executive as you have Qualifications. There you are given more forms, and a variety of pamphlets on the Training Opportunities Scheme. You are further directed to yet another room to hand over your National Insurance card and complete the registration process. There are already eight or a dozen people there and you pick up a queue ticket, sit down and wait.

Eventually a young man takes down yet more details and asks you if you want Supplementary Benefit. You are more or less expecting Unemployment Benefit by return, and say thank you that will suffice. 'Come back Monday to sign on', he says, 'entrance F at 11 and here is your pink card.'

On Monday when you sign and ask for your benefit, you are told that a) your contributions must be checked which may take some time, and b) as you were monthly paid you don't get it

for four weeks anyway. 'Meantime here is a form to take to the Department of Health and Social Security; best phone for an appointment so as to save time.'

Armed with the Social Security Acts 1966 and 71, the Supplementary Benefits Handbook and miscellaneous pay slips, mortgage notices, rates assessments, etc. you sally forth and 'establish your claim'. A man in the waiting room tells you, 'You know I really hate coming here - they won't talk to you, don't even look at you. Nobody tells you anything.' You find he's right, and that the only result you get is a demand for yet more information later. You're so mad you stamp off in a rage, but thinking that, anyway next week, you'll get Unemployment Benefit.

But they still haven't checked out your contributions. Back you go to the SS and request a payment under Section 13 of the Act, on grounds of urgent need. This is turned down absolutely as "we very very rarely give payments over the counter, and even then only to mothers of small children." After some persistence your case is re-opened. More appointments, more time, and eventually a Giro arrives and a Running Order is established. You become ill, find the Running Order is therefore invalidated - and the circus begins again.

So what emerges from all this? I discovered that vast reserves of patience and persistence were needed to extract anything at all. Your self-respect is eroded to nothing. The main problem is not so much that the actual benefits are totally inadequate - that in itself is bad enough - but that one must go through such a tedious, exhausting and humiliating process in order to claim them. You must conclusively prove your claim: they must check your contributions - so if you've moved from Newcastle to London you may be assured that this will take a considerable time! Not until every comma and apostrophe and gap in your record has been checked out can you expect so much as a new ha'penny. Women are doubly hindered, for the system regards them not as individual persons, but as appendages to men, and such benefits as they may eventually get are usually smaller in size and harder to claim.

Anyway, here is an outline of your basic entitlements, and some of the pitfalls to watch out for.

Firstly, it is useful to know just exactly what you can claim. The best way to assess this is to get in touch with your local Claimant's Union. They will go over your case with you and work out your exact entitlement. They've been through it all before, and already know the devious ins and outs of the system. This is infinitely preferable to wading your way through the DHSS pamphlets, which are overstuffed with terms, conditions and subsections serving to confuse rather than to clarify. In contrast the Claimants' Union' pamphlets deal with actual practice rather than Government handout Theory-As-Indicated-By-Policy. Also the Claimants' Union will back you up *unconditionally* in making claims and appeals. (They offer information, support and experience.)

Bearing in mind the painstaking slowness of the SS, it is a good idea to claim on your first day of unemployment, or better still, go down before you leave and say that you're forced to leave as the work is unsuitable and that you're looking for another job. This will get the official wheels in motion, and is very useful in establishing that you're doing your best to get work.

The Social Security system is organised under two broad headings:

- 1.) The National Insurance Scheme. Benefits in this division depend largely on contributions, and include Unemployment Benefit, Sickness Benefit, Invalidity Benefit, Maternity Benefits, Retirement Pension, Widows' Benefits, Guardian's Allowance, Child's Special Allowance and the Death Grant. Old persons pension and the attendance allowance are also NI benefits, but are not subject to contribution record. The Industrial Injuries scheme is a subsection of this division.
- 2.) The Supplementary Benefits Scheme. This does not depend on contributions. The Family Income Supplement is incorporated under this section.

National Insurance Benefits

1. National Insurance Benefits depend on contribution conditions: If you have not paid or been credited with the right number and kind of contributions, you will not get them . . . For example, a person who has not contributed as an employed person will not qualify for unemployment benefit. If she or he has contributed but has less than fifty contributions paid or credited in the last contribution year, she/he may qualify but the benefit will be reduced. To qualify for anything at all you must have a minimum of 26 Class 1 contributions. (Usually there are variations)

The term "Contribution Year" can be confusing: it refers to the year in which your contributions have been paid, which for NI purposes does not follow a simple calendar year. You can figure out your contribution year from the letter after the number on your card, ie A -- March, B -- June, C -- September, D -- December. The year starts on the first Monday of the month thus designated, and your right to benefit begins five months after the end of the contribution year. For example, if your National Insurance number ends with the letter "A", you must pay stamps from March 1973 until March 1974 in order to qualify for benefit during the period August 1974 until August 1975.

In claiming unemployment you are not paid for the first 3 days of unemployment with regard to the flat rate entitlement, nor for the first 12 days of unemployment as per your earnings related supplement. You must claim as soon as you are unemployed as payments will not be made retroactively. You can draw flat rate unemployment for up to 312 days and earnings related supplement for 156 days (Sundays are not counted - being days of rest it's assumed you don't eat either) - in any one period of unemployment. Periods of unemployment separated by less than 13 weeks are counted as one break. Once your benefit has run out you cannot qualify again until you have been back in work and have paid at least 13 more Class 1 contributions as an employed person. (Variations for self employed, etc.)

Flat Rate Benefits are as follows:

Single person over 18	7.35
Married woman	5.15
Adult dependant	4.55
1st dependant child	2.30
2nd dependant child	1.40
each other dependant child	1.30

For women the position is complicated. If you are married and have opted out of paying stamps you are not eligible for unemployment benefit. If your husband is unemployed and satisfies the conditions for drawing benefit, he can claim for you as his dependant wife at the rate of 4.55 per week. If you have not opted out, you must pay for the same number of stamps at the same rate as a single woman in order to qualify for benefit, but you will only be paid 5.15 per week. An unemployed husband can claim his wife as a dependant, but an unemployed wife who is living with her husband can neither claim him as a dependant nor claim the full unemployed rate of 7.35, regardless of how many stamps she may have paid. However, a single woman, widow, or a separated* or divorced wife can claim in her own right for herself and any dependant children living with her. A separated wife can only do this if her husband is not paying her more than 2.25 per week maintenance.

You may get extra money in the form of an earning related supplement. This is based on the amount you were earning before you stopped working. Your earnings in any one tax year (April till April) determine your right to an earnings related supplement in the year beginning the following January. If your taxable earnings during the relevant tax year were more than 500.00 you will get a supplement of one third of the amount by which your average weekly earnings exceed 10.00, up to a ceiling of 30.00, plus fifteen percent of your earnings between 30.00 and 42.00. If your average weekly earnings were less than 10.00 no supplement is payable. If you are a married woman and are not paying National Insurance, but only the 4p stamp against industrial injuries you will likewise get no supplement.

You can take a part time job while unemployed and still claim benefit provided that you still remain available for full time employment. You may not earn more than 75p per day and such work must be in a job which is not your usual occupation.

They will try to disqualify you from benefit if:

- A. They think you are on strike.
- B. You were dismissed for "misconduct".
- C. You left your job "voluntarily without just cause".

D. You turn down a job "without good cause".
B, C. & D. are often very broadly defined by the NI - they won't pay you if they can avoid it! - but this aspect can also be turned to work in your favour in disputing such action. It is particularly helpful if you have established that you are looking for suitable work as mentioned previously. Unsuitable work can be defined as work you're not skilled at (assuming you have a skill or a trade), having to travel long distances, having compulsory overtime, being paid a lower salary than you are accustomed to or having to work unreasonable hours. Always remember that you can appeal.

Industrial Injury is a separate and more generous section which covers claims by employees arising from accidents at work and industrial diseases. The basic benefit is higher, and the additional allowances more plentiful.

There are numerous other allowances and provisions under different headings for other circumstances. Women get a bad deal once again, particularly in Pensions, but also in such areas as Widows' Benefits and Maternity

Grants, all of which are so camouflaged in conditions that it is difficult to track down the ultimate benefit. Widows' benefits depend basically on how old you are when he dies and the number of National Insurance stamps he has paid. Mothers under 16 years of age cannot claim the Maternity Grant, nor can they claim Supplementary Benefits in their own right - the only way to get money is for a parent to claim them as a dependant child! Pensions are a national disgrace. Basically your pension depends on your husband's and his retirement age, though if you are single you get the same as a single man. The topic is too big to deal with here, but can be further investigated in the publications listed at the end.

Finding out just what you are entitled to can be quite a chore in itself -

this is where the Claimants' Unions are invaluable. The SS do not withhold information asked for, but they don't volunteer anything either. It is up to you to ask them questions and to claim for everything you can think of. 2. Supplementary Benefits are very different. The myth and the reality are so far apart as to be painfully ludicrous. In a flight of fanciful rhetoric the Supplementary Benefits Handbook declares: "... everyone in Great Britain aged 16 or over is entitled to supplementary benefit if his 'resources' are less than his 'requirements'".

The main problem is that, unlike the National Insurance Scheme, there is no absolute basis of assessment. Whereas both rates and qualifying conditions are laid down in detail in the National Insurance Provisions, the Supplementary Benefits Scheme functions very largely according to "Discretionary Rule". By this the Supplementary Benefits Commission have absolute powers to decide 'whether any person is entitled to benefit, and the amount of any benefit'. The whole thing is infinitely flexible, varying according to the whim of the local office, with the result that the horizon moves forever and the Claimant has no 'rights' as such.

Supplementary Benefits

A Supplementary Benefit is just that: *supplementary* to any other benefit(s) to which you may be entitled. Thus, if your needs are assessed at 20 pounds per week and you are entitled to flat rate unemployment for a single person, you will still receive only 20 pounds - made up of

Unemployment Benefit - 7.35
and Supplementary Benefit - 12.65

If you are not entitled to unemployment benefit, you will still get the 20 pounds, but all under the Supplementary Benefits heading.

The Supplementary Benefits Handbook is useful in that it details fairly concisely the benefits which you *may* be eligible for, but its value is limited by the fact that it merely indicates policy rather than being a guide to actual practice. The gap can be very wide indeed, decisions on individual cases resting almost wholly on the "judgement" of the local SS officers. Once again, contact your Claimants' Union. They will help you unwind the red tape.

Most people who wish to claim Supplementary Benefit must register for employment: notable exceptions include the following:

- A. Persons incapable of work (based on medical evidence)

B. Women with dependant children under 16 living with them.

C. Blind persons who are not used to working outside the home

and also, depending on the circumstances,

D. Persons required at home to care for sick relatives.

E. Middleaged widows (over 45) with little or no work experience

F. Persons on training courses.

Basically, then, to claim Supplementary Benefit you must register for work at your local employment exchange. They will forward a form B1 to the SS. You must then phone to make an appointment with the SS (this saves time: Tuesdays and Wednesdays are usually quietest, but avoid Fridays) and go down armed with proof for your claim. This includes such things as: Rent book or rent receipt; Building Society statement or evidence of mortgage and interest payments (the SS only pay interest, not capital); latest rates, water rates or ground rent receipts; Family allowance order book, recent pay slips, letter from employer if you are starting work "a week in hand"; Form B1 or B1C from the Department of Employment if you are unemployed; Court order if you are separated from your husband and any order as has been made for you or your childrens' maintenance; details of education grant.

In assessing your benefit the SS must disregard your possessions, up to 2 pounds a week part time earnings, and any capital up to 325 pounds. Between 325 pounds and 800 pounds they can deduct a levy of 5p/25 pounds per week. Over 800 pounds they deduct 12½p per 25 pounds per week. If you intend to inform the SS of any savings you may have you will have to bring proofs of the amount - ie bank statement, share certificates, etc. No bank, however, will give particulars of any savings you may have with them without your written consent, which makes bank savings virtually impossible to check up on. Shares etc. on the other hand are more readily traceable.

After having an interview with the SS - if not at your local office, at your home (Note, you do not have to have them at your home if you don't want them - just don't let them in) - you should receive either an order book or a running order within a week for the amount of your assessment. Always ask for a written assessment of your benefit (form A124), as this will form the basis for any further claim or appeal you may have. Appeals should be made within 21 days of the date of such assessment.

The basic rates of Supplementary Benefit are as follows:

Married couple	11.65
Single householder	7.15
Person aged 18 +	5.70
16 - 17	4.40
13 - 15	3.70
11 - 12	3.00
5 - 10	2.45
under 5	2.05

Plus a Rent Addition of either

- a. Rent and rates (minus rebates)
- b. Mortgage interest plus ground rent, insurance & repairs
- c. 80p rent allowance for a non-householder
- d. full board and lodging plus 2.30 'pocket money'.

Plus Long Term Addition:

All pensioners get this - other claimants, except the unemployed, get this after 2 years.

Married couple 1.20 ▶

Single householder	1.00
Other person 18 +	.90
Boarder	.10

Deductions and Disregards:

Family Allowances; Family Income Supplements; Maintenance, Sickness or Unemployment Benefit; Pensions and Invalidity Benefit are deducted in full. Up to 2.00 part time earnings and up to 800.00 savings should be ignored.

EXTRAS:

These usually come under the heading of Exceptional Needs and are granted wholly at the discretion of the local SS office. They are unlikely to grant you them if you have capital over 125 pounds.

Emergency Payment: Section 13 of the 1966 SS Act states that "Nothing shall prevent the payment of benefit in an urgent case". In actual fact this is exceedingly difficult to obtain and rarely granted. Urgency is open to subjective definition.

Lump Sum Grants: For furniture, household equipment, gas and electric bills, debts, rent arrears, removal expenses, floor covering, curtains, decorating costs, etc. They can provide new beds and bedding (3 sheets and 3 blankets per bed in use, plus pillows and pillowcases).

Regular Weekly Additions: are available for such things as hire purchase on cookers, washing machines, furniture, etc. You can get extra money each week for laundry needs, extra heating because of age, ill health, bad housing, etc. You can also get extra for special diets for illness or extra nourishment, domestic help, etc.

Clothing: you can claim for the following (and anything else you may require):

Men: overcoat, jacket, sweater, waistcoat, two pairs of trousers, 3 pairs of shoes, 3 shirts, 2 vests, 2 pants, 3 pairs socks, pyjamas.

Women: overcoat, cardigan or jacket, 2 dresses, vests, knickers, bras, corsets, stockings, nightdresses, shoes.

Girls: overcoat, cardigan, 2 dresses, 2 pairs shoes, 3 pairs socks, petticoats, nightdresses.

Boys: overcoat, jacket, sweater, 2 pairs trousers, 2 pairs shoes, shirts, vests, pants, socks, pyjamas.

DENIALS:

Wage Stop: Benefits may be cut below the scale rates if he has been earning a low salary or if the SS consider that his potential salary may be low.

Four Week Rule: A single unskilled man under the age of 45 will only get unemployment benefit for four weeks, after which time he must re-apply if he is still unemployed. 3 months is the usual limit for women and married men in this classification.

Cohabitation Rule: Possibly the most notorious and widely abused policy in the system, this ruling assumes that a man living with a woman is supporting her financially. She therefore has no individual claim. The man must make any claims, and any allowances or pensions are payable to him. Cohabitation is not defined by the Act, and the SS commonly resort to all sort of unsavoury devices to prove it - spying on the place of residence, questioning neighbours, etc. They normally regard cohabitation as proven if they spot the same male spending 3 consecutive nights in a woman's home, regardless of the

policy indicated in their publications. The rampant injustices implicit in this policy are shameful and obvious but there is no space to go into them further.

Married women: See above. The man is always regarded as head of the household, and married women can neither claim nor appeal. Women are forced into dependency on men.

Job Classification: As noted earlier the unskilled worker is at a distinct disadvantage in terms of the rules that apply and the way he/she is treated. If you have a skill or profession, on the other hand, you have a certain amount of say in what jobs you will take. Jobs can be turned down as unsuitable if they are not in your line of work, and a union ticket can be very helpful. Qualifications do not generally seem to be checked up on, but the SS will declassify after a certain length of time if you continue unemployed. Thus a teacher may be classified as a clerical worker after being unemployed for a year, and her benefit accordingly reduced on the basis of her reduced potential earnings.

Unsupported Mothers: You don't have to register for employment, and can claim when you're 7 months pregnant. You'll need the same documents as anyone else plus a certificate of confinement from a doctor. If you have the right number of stamps (26 in the last 12 months) you can claim a maternity grant of 25 pounds. Claim between 9 weeks before the birth and 3 months after on a form BM4A from the SS or clinic. You can also get up to 5 pounds a week maternity benefit if you (or your husband) have enough stamps - for 18 weeks, beginning 11 weeks before the expected week of confinement. In addition to other entitlements you are entitled to free milk (1 pint per day per child under 5), free school dinners, and allowances for special diet, extra laundry, nursery charges (if you're working) and domestic help. Free prescriptions, medical and dental care, glasses and butter tokens are available to you as to anyone else receiving supplementary benefit, except that you are entitled to additional allowances for each child.

The SS is apt to try and force you to take out a maintenance order against the father of your child, and many women go to work rather than face their humiliating questions. You don't actually have to do a thing - it's basically the SS's problem, not yours, and they can take out a court order if they have been supporting you. If you are separated and want to avoid any hassle you can draw up a separation agreement saying that henceforward neither of you will be responsible for the maintenance of the other. If you have a maintenance order it may save you a lot of bother to sign it over to the SS, as they then have the problem of collecting and should give you an order book for the amount you're entitled to.

Family Income Supplement

You must be in full time work to receive this, and earning a low wage. The amount could hardly be more minimal, and you'd probably be better off not working at all. However, here's how it works. The supplement is half the amount by which the claimants normal gross income falls short of a "prescribed amount", subject to maximum of 5 pounds, or 6 pounds if there are more than 3 children in the family. The prescribed amount for a family with one child is 21.50 per week, and 2.50 each additional child. Thus, for a family with 3 children and a gross income of 24 pounds, the calculation would be as follows:

Prescribed amount	26.50
Gross Income	24.00
Deficiency	2.50
F.I.S. payable:	
- 1/2 of 2.50 = 1.25	
rounded to	1.30

So for three children you are awarded by a generous state the grand sum total of 1.30 to augment your income. Wow.

If, however, the normal gross income were less than 14.70 per week, the family would be eligible for the maximum FIS award of 6 pounds a week. Count your blessings.

Appeals:

These should be made within 3 weeks of any decision affecting you, and preferably as soon as possible. Keep dated copies of all correspondence and phone the Regional Office frequently. The Claimants' Union will help in formulating appeals and in giving you general advice. The other groups mentioned below are also helpful. But basically, to lodge an appeal all you have to do is to give notice to your local office of the DHSS that you intend to appeal against their decision.

The main London centre of the Claimants' Union is the East London Claimants' Union, Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Road, E.1., telephone 01-790-3867.

Other helpful groups are:

The Child Poverty Action Group
Citizens Advice Bureaux
Release

National Council for One-Parent Families,
255 Kentish Town Road, London NW5.

Useful publications include:

Women's Rights: A Practical Guide, by Anna Coote and Tess Gill. Penguin, price 60p.

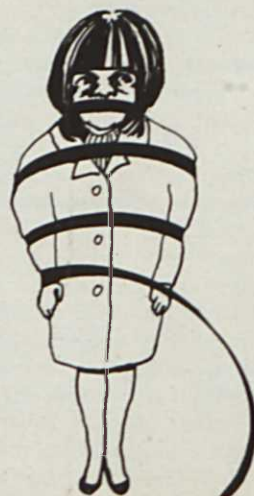
The Penguin Guide to Supplementary Benefits, by Tony Lynes, price 45p.

National Welfare Benefits Handbook, from C.P.A.G., 1 Macklin Street, London WC2 (01-242-3225), price 25p.

Supplementary Benefits Handbook, HMSO bookshops, price 32½p.

Claimants Union Handbooks - available from the East London Group, or from the Claimants Publications Library, 19 Carlyle Road, Ladywood, Birmingham 16.

DHSS Leaflets: NI16, Sickness Benefit, NI12 Unemployment Benefit, NI17A Maternity Benefits, NI1A Guide for Married Women, NI95 Guidance for Women whose Marriage is Ended by Divorce or Annulment, NI43 Excusals and Credits, NI42, Guidance For The Non-Employed Person, NI30 Students, NI125 Training for Further Employment, NI31 Apprentices. ■



body works

Judy Clark's recent exhibition aroused extreme reactions. While several women critics were swept into pseud's corner by their enthusiasm for the exhibition and the Tate was buying one of her works, many others were appalled. Judy makes works of art out of matter that is usually hidden or thrown away. She takes dust, urine, nail parings, menstrual blood etc., and mounts them with clinical care, creating an effect not unlike a museum cabinet. Her self portrait consisting of hairs from all parts of her body and fluids from her nine orifices could hardly be further from the sweet plastic image of women celebrated in pop art. Rosie Parker asked her about her work.

R. Much of the material you use is seen as dirt by most people. Do you think that dirt lies in the eye of the beholder?

J. On one level, yes - in fact I was thinking of creating a series of situations which would actually be considered dirty in subtle ways; an obsessively carefully laid table with milk in a bottle instead of a jug - showing the arbitrary nature of good manners and ideas of dirt. I probably won't do it.

R. The milk bottle in itself isn't dirty, only in the context of an immaculately laid table?

J. Yes, dirt is really disorder, matter out of place - Mary Douglas in her book 'Purity and Danger' articulates what I feel about dirt. She says that we consider objects or ideas to be dirty and unclean when they interfere with the



Judy Clark

order we impose on our lives and environment.

R. Its true that our view of dirt isn't always based on hygiene. Food as such isn't dirty but it's dirty when spattered on our clothes; cat hairs are clean on the cat but dirty on the sofa.

J. But then hair off the body can be acceptable if it is in a locket. I've seen brooches with hair woven and plaited in the most incredible designs, and its acceptable like that. But tangled, in a disordered mass in Mary Douglas' terms, it is not acceptable.

R. Because then it isn't under our control. All your work strikes me as impeccably ordered; every nail paring mounted according to size and shape, each of the hairs you collected from your bed laid out horizontally. Do you do it consciously?

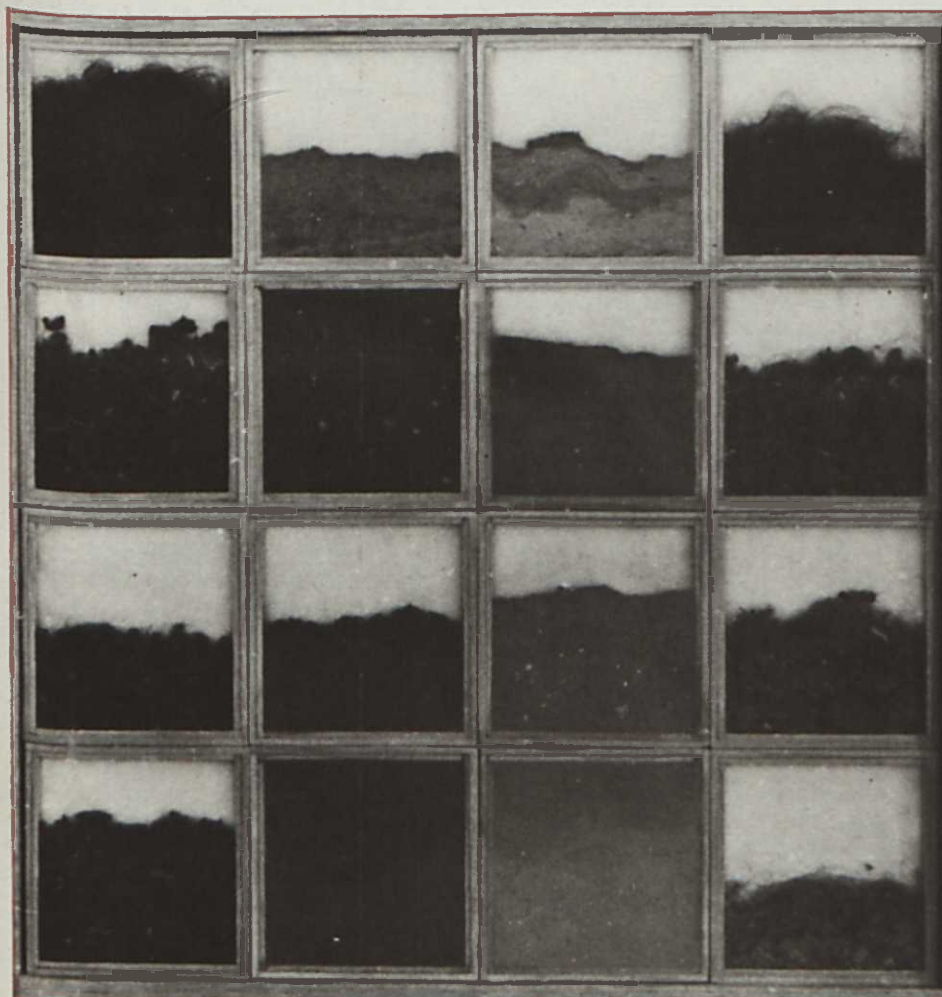
J. Yes, one of the reasons it is put out in an ordered way is that it is so dangerous that if it was out of control it would be totally unacceptable. It would be obscene and revolting and nobody would look at it. But because it is laid out so carefully it creates a dualism between unacceptability and acceptability. That is one of the things that a lot of people commented on. They said, "It's so beautiful but Oh! isn't it awful."

R. There is a further dualism between the intensely personal material you work with, your own menstrual blood, dust from your home etc., and the cold, detached, clinical way you lay it out.

J. I think if I had been a man I would have had to impose more of myself on the lay out. Malcolm, (who she lives with), and I deal with very similar ideas - all centred around the body and our day to day occupations - only his are more autobiographical and less scientific than mine. He wanted to do a skin print of me, as if it had been peeled off and flattened. He wanted it to look like a real skin. I did the same sort of thing except that I just wanted to compare all the different textures and things. But Malcolm said that if he had been doing it he would have to do a positive thing - to make a positive impression of the skin. I would have been quite happy to take footprints whereas he would have had to create a foot.

R. All the material you use comes from your body. Are you very aware of your body?

J. No, I don't think anymore than anyone else. In fact, I take less exercise and trouble than most people. I think that living here (an old house above a shop in Hackney) made me much more aware of grooming and cleansing. (One of Judy's pieces consists of soiled cotton wools collected and mounted). I had never lived without a bathroom before, and having to make an expedition for a bath brought into focus things that I hadn't bothered to consider.



Soft Surfaces

R. Had you never used the body as a subject before?

J. I did my thesis at college on body images in the environment. Houses and the way we design our environment are related to the structure of the face and the body. The body is a very rich source of symbolism. As Mary Douglas points out, its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious – a society's attitude to the body mirrors its social organization and anxieties.

R. How does the idea of the body as analogous to the structure of society link to the taboos surrounding blood, urine, or shit.

J. Different cultures view dirt in different ways and the way they view it tends to reflect the way their society is structured. Tribes which are very secure in their boundaries have less hangups about bodily taboos than tribes that were constantly attacked from the outside.

The Jews are an example of a threatened society who create a structure and framework for their lives out of dietary and sex pollution laws.

R. Notions of purity are also linked to status

painting. Which is nice because the process is as important as anything else.

R. I think the menstrual pieces are more radical. You are breaking deeply entrenched taboos by exposing menstrual blood and transforming it into a work of art.

J. Yes, funnily enough it became the central work which was not how I originally saw it. Once I started doing it, it became very powerful. I found it very touching to do. In fact I wrote down all the taboos associated with menstruation: You must not walk between two men. You must not enter a holy place. You must not cook food. You must not poke the fire. You must not scratch. Keep out of sight.

R. All these taboos are built on fear of defilement, of pollution. If the women broke the taboos disaster occurred – the two men she walked between died, or the crops failed if she entered the field. Pollution laws drastically curtailed women's activities didn't they?

J. Though they seem to be built on fear of women, fear of the unknown. Strangely the men in some societies cut themselves to

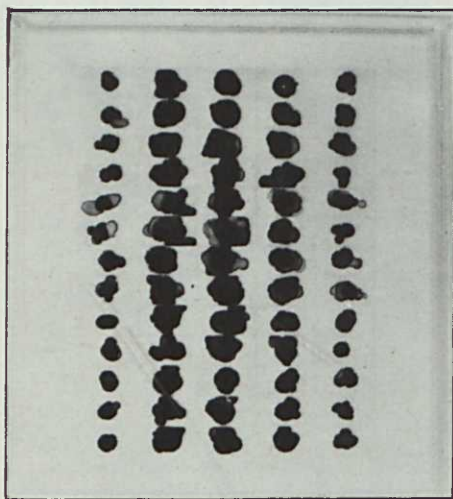
housework is the only way of demonstrating some control over the environment, some self determination. But it gets incredibly complicated with the 'cleanliness is next to godliness' concept and the Protestant association of dirt with the devil and corruption.

J. I find the 'House and Garden' compulsive cleanliness really alienating. To me it's showing the world an image of what you want to be, rather than what you are. My work may be ordered but it's showing what's behind the facade. I saw a TV ad for furniture – people were shown huddled up on an old sofa and when they brought their new set of chairs they appeared scattered and isolated.

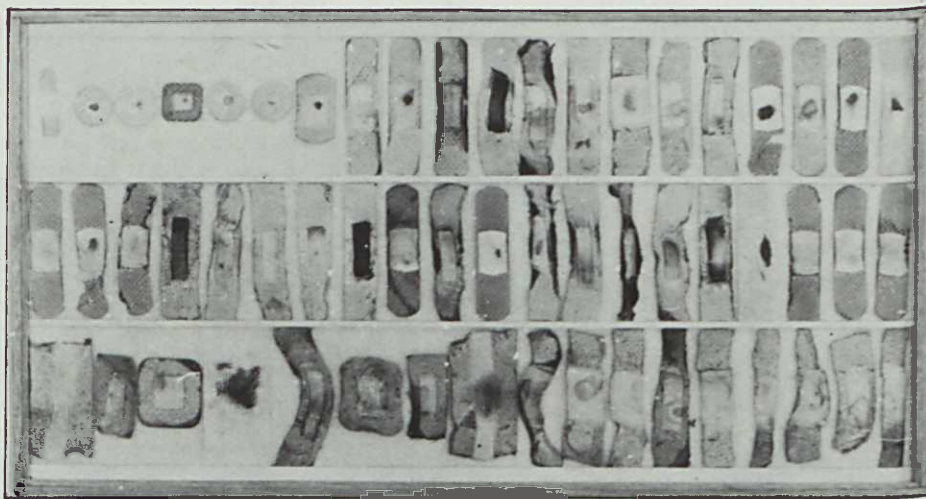
R. So your work is a comment on housework?

J. No, I wasn't consciously critiquing housework, or even trying to make a creative activity out of the materials of housework.

Housework is just part of my life; most creative activity comes out of things you do, things you look at. Housework made me aware of that there are things going on all the time that we are unaware of – an invisible rate of



Menstruation



Small Wounds

aren't they? In a caste society, the lower castes deal with dirt, allowing the higher castes to remain 'pure'. Does your work relate to the idea that beliefs about cleanliness maintain divisions in society?

J. Well, that raises a sort of side issue. I don't really know why I did the work. I just did it. All the social and the female implications came as a by-product.

R. What female implications do you mean?

J. I think men particularly are rather horrified by my work. Because it doesn't fit in with their idea of what women do. It's never publicly admitted that women bleed. It's OK to talk about men's sub-life but you can't talk about women's sub-life.

R. So in a sense you are breaking down women's isolation?

J. I'm breaking men's isolation too. Women are the one's who usually have to deal with it; clean things up. But it's aimed as much at men as it is at women in that women are aware of it but don't think about it; whereas men are not even aware of it.

R. But you are publicising private rituals.

J. Yes, and I think one of the things that really intrigues people about my work is 'how on earth did she do it' or 'what a thing to do'.

They are obsessed with the image of me doing it – particularly the semen pieces (semen stained tissues arranged in wood and glass boxes). Is as if people were more obsessed with the artist mixing the colours than the actual

simulate menstruation. They believe that menstruation is a cleansing process.

R. Where male dominance is absolute and maintained through physical violence, sex pollution laws are non-existent. Yet where the position of women is ambivalent, when they have some rights and privileges, sex pollution laws flourish. Doesn't Mary Douglas say that sex pollution laws are used to impose a system on society by exaggerating the differences between within and without, male and female... etc.

J. Menstruation is still hidden and horrific for little girls today. When I started menstruating I thought, "Oh my God, is it going to go on for 30 years; was it never going to stop?"

R. Shame and embarrassment are part of the feelings women are made to feel about dirt and dust as well. Is your work connected to housework?

J. Yes, it is. I did much more housework when we first moved here than I do now. It took a long while before I started not to bother about it. I was very conscious and resentful of housework. But it also made me aware of how much dust there was. The sheer volume of it – I couldn't understand where it all came from.

R. I think that some intolerance of dirt is normal. After all, animals naturally clean themselves and each other. Dirt avoidance can become pathological because of all it symbolizes, I mean if dirt is disorder – matter out of place, as you said, then for many women

consumption that I saw in the mountain of dust (it's mostly skin) which is cast off everyday.

R. What do you mean by consumption?

J. It's a question of passage and process. Like food going in and being shitted out or urinated. The whole process of constant flux is one we never notice.

R. How do you relate that to your work?

J. It relates to my interest in time and change. One of the things I've been doing recently is drinking a fixed amount of liquid every day and eating dry things. I measure how much I urinate, taking time photographs of the flasks of urine and orange juice. As one goes up the other goes down over the period of a week.

R. Are you doing these things to learn about yourself?

J. No, the reason I do a lot of these things is simple curiosity – not knowing the answers. I didn't know how many hairs are shed in a bed over a week, so I collected them. I didn't know whether or not we have intense periods of cutting ourselves. So I collected and dated old sticking plasters. I've only recently become interested in rhythms and cycles. Again it's a metaphorical thing; if there are rhythms in the body that you can understand, then maybe you can understand social rhythms, cosmic rhythms, historical rhythms – one system can reflect all sorts of other systems. It's so easy to build analogies with the body. ■



The BBC Documentary Department calls itself a 'balanced, fair impartial body'. Sarah Boston describes what she'd call it.

Where do I stand?

My first experience with the B.B.C. Documentary Department was an interview in which it was explained to me, by a producer, that he didn't think he could employ a woman to be a director on the series. Notwithstanding I still held the illusion that even for a woman documentary film maker where better to be employed than the B.B.C. Documentary Department. Two brief periods of working for them soon revealed that working for the Documentary Department meant the opposite, it meant creative and political emasculation and if you didn't accept that it meant not working or not having your work accepted.

In the course of a year over a series of programmes called "Where do I stand?" the B.B.C. revealed exactly where it stood and the battle to make those programmes and to get them transmitted is worth recording. After that first interview and a few more like it I had a lucky break. I met a B.B.C. Documentary Producer, Philip Donnellan, who liked my first film, was setting up a series and employed me to direct some of them. The series was to be six half hour films called "Where do I Stand?" and each film was to be a personal profile of an ordinary person talking about where they felt they stood in relation to their work, family, race, sex or whatever was relevant to them. We filmed three - a West Indian Railway Signaller in Birmingham, an old agricultural worker who did anything from freelance gamekeeping to hedge-laying and a young miner who was a 'militant' from a Yorkshire pit. Having made the first three we showed them to the head of Documentaries who received them in stony silence - the stony silence was maintained for several months and I was laid off as my contract had expired.

Later it emerged that the Controller of B.B.C. 1 wanted to see the films 'buried' but fortunately his immediate superior thought otherwise and two more films were commissioned to make a stunted series of five. Philip Donnellan proceeded to re-convene the same team - camera crew, editor etc. as we regarded it as a 'team effort' with everyone directly involved and I was re-employed. I immediately began setting up a film with a woman trade unionist - a convenor in a telecommunications factory in Coventry. This was not exactly easy as the management

couldn't believe that a woman was responsible enough to make decisions about locations lighting etc. and wouldn't show me around the factory. A letter had to be sent from Philip Donnellan stating I had total responsibility for taking all decisions relating to filming in the factory before I got access to the shop floor. Later when we did finally film the management offered us lunch but a separate table had to be laid in a special room for us as the club building where the management ate was for men only - except for waitresses.

Three days before we were scheduled to film in the factory a telex message arrived from the head of Documentaries saying that filming could not begin until the subjects had been approved and that there was no justification for me 'Miss Boston's' re-employment. With a battle I was briefly re-employed to make the one film and the proposed subjects, an Irish traveller and the convenor were accepted with the proviso "that the woman shop steward does not hold Marxist views which would make her too similar to the young minor." (Their spelling mistake.)

With all the films made, me unemployed, Philip Donnellan had to battle to get them transmitted. He was told they were not "network quality" (Peter Watkins was told that about 'The War Game') and that the last two films should have redressed "the social and political balance". The programmes were scheduled to go out individually at odd times with no serial consistency. We strongly opposed this as by isolating each film it would make each person seem like an 'individual' in a

freakish way and not as a series of serious people who had a right to be listened to and watched seriously. They were the very kind of people who never have a chance to express their opinions on television in any depth. The films were finally transmitted some months later, late at night in the summer. Much, I am sure, to the Department's displeasure they were, by in large, very well reviewed. The final installment of the story was that Philip Donnellan was told that he had been advised strongly not to offer "documentaries of the socially aware type" and what was more the Controller of B.B.C. 1 stated that "he will not accept any further documentary offers from you." Philip Donnellan was moved to B.B.C. 2 and I haven't worked for the Documentary Department again.

I did try my luck again and went for an interview with a Producer in the Department. The interview is more unbelievable than my very first interview but neatly sums up the current doctrine of the Department. During a discussion with the Producer on a proposed series I indicated that I would be more interested in making one particular film than another. This was regarded with contempt and I was asked whether, as a 'professional', didn't I feel capable of making any film on any subject? Coolly I replied 'Yes, I did feel capable, but it seemed only sensible to me to give people subjects in which they had a particular interest or were 'involved'.' The word 'involved' was like a red rag (or red flag) and I was quickly given a short sharp lecture on the sin of 'involvement' and the virtue of uncommitted, professional objectivity. Needless to say I didn't get the job.

The Producer in that interview was just being a good mouthpiece for the B.B.C.'s attitude which is explained at some length in their pamphlet "Principles and Practice in Documentary Programmes" drawn up in 1972 and circulated to all members of the Department. It's their blueprint of how to make the technically competent, drab, balanced pap that is the pride of the Documentary Department. Just to give you an idea of the blueprint here is what the B.B.C. has to say on 'Balance and Fairness':- "If a producer has very strong partisan views about the subject of this kind of programme (e.g. ►

supposing he is producing a documentary about public schools yet is himself violently against the independent school system) should he allow his own views to dictate the nature of the programme? The classic answer is that unless he can lay his own views totally on one side, he should on no account be producing this programme at all. ... If the producer still feels intent on expressing his views, he should leave the B.B.C. and make his name in some other field. Perhaps one day he will be invited back in his own right to express his views as a contributor." The B.B.C.'s defence of this position is that the B.B.C. in the public's eye is a balanced, fair, impartial body and it would be to break the confidence of the public to be otherwise.

This of course is a total myth which the B.B.C. has a particular interest in perpetuating. This is the B.B.C.'s 'objective' position. The Chairman is a government appointment, the government controls the B.B.C.'s pocket by controlling the licence and licence fee and the majority of those in control of the B.B.C. are Middle-Class, Male and White. Is it surprising that what they take as objectivity is the establishment point of view, you can be as partisan about that as you like and you'll rise fast up the hierarchy. However, if you feel partisan about being a worker, a woman, black or about the evils of the system we live under you are politely requested to either suppress your partisan feelings entirely or go out the door.

Perhaps in twenty years time I'll be invited back as a white-haired, socialist, woman, freak to contribute two edited minutes to some fair and balanced documentary. Or perhaps we might control it by then.

The New Professionals

*Like in the army, the soldiers
Of the B.B.C.
Are trained when out shooting
Not to feel a y fear*

*For it's a career
In the new professionals
And with an armoury of objectivity
You can go anywhere
And not have to care
About what you see and hear.*

*Like in the army, the officers
Of the B.B.C.
Are expected to do their duty
For Queen and country.*

*Because it's a career
With a pension
If you don't question
Why you are here, guarded by hardware
And the millions are out there.*

*Like the army, the B.B.C.
is there
To control the big debate
Between the people and the State.*

*For they've a career
In the Chair
With gilt edged security
If they serve those that own the country
But we're the public and pay the licence fee
So shouldn't they be serving you and me?*

Sarah Boston

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Books



Anais Nin operating her hand press

Diaries of Anais Nin Quartet (Paperback) 75p - £1.00 each

Anais Nin started writing a diary at the age of 13 when her parents separated. Out of approximately 150 volumes, the years 1931 - 47 have been edited and published in 4 volumes. They begin when she was living with her family near Paris and end with her as an established novelist in New York.

A year ago when review copies of the diary arrived at Spare Rib, there seemed no urgent reason to review them, anymore than there would be to review *The Second Sex*, or *A Room of One's Own*, as Anais Nin had been well acclaimed and established by the movement as, if not a feminist, a fore-mother. Recently, however, with the appearance of Volumes 1 and 2 in paperback, people have begun to criticise her. The Observer dismissed the diaries, in a contradictory capsule review, as egotistical but providing interesting insights into Henry Miller.

All diaries are egotistical, but Anais Nin's search for self-knowledge was not an aim in itself; it was, in Karen Horney's terms, 'a means of liberating the forces of spontaneous growth'. Analysis and introspection eventually freed Anais Nin from the doubts and insecurities which she said had 'bound and bandaged her like a mummy.' But it did more than that. She believed that only by intensifying the personal and articulating the unconscious could the

general be reached - introspection could become communication:

'I opposed subjective to objective, imagination to realism. I thought that having gone so deeply into my own feelings and dramas I could never again reach objectivity and knowledge of others. But now I know that any experience carried out deeply to its ultimate leads you beyond yourself into a larger relation with the experience of others.'

Her beliefs were based on her knowledge of psychoanalysis and her methods - her use of dreams and symbols - came from surrealism, but adapted to her personal framework. The first volume explores the effect her parents' behaviour had on her, particularly her father's desertion of the family. She draws no sociological conclusions about the nature of the patriarchal nuclear family and demands no changes. But her belief that the general can be reached through the personal is amply justified by the number of people who say they identify with her reaction to a family situation.

Her father was inconsistent, over-critical and deceitful. She connects her behaviour and her compulsion to keep a diary to both her love for him and her reaction against him. She traces her need for truth (mirrored in immediately recording experience in the diary), her search for a father-figure, her need for closeness and love, her battle against timidity and her lack of confid-

ence. She regrets:

'the gentleness of those crippled by overpowering parents... they crippled my anger with fear of consequences. If you rebel, you lose love.'

In compensation, she developed an idealised image of herself at once stimulating and impossible to live up to: displayed in the diaries in the way she repeats compliments paid her. And, in an effort to please everyone - to gain love and admiration - she fragmented herself. She attempted to gain wholeness by undergoing psychoanalysis but said she only felt truly herself when writing the diary.

Ironically, though she originally sought father figures in her two male analysts, they came to depend on her - a pattern repeated through nearly all her relationships in the early volumes of the published diaries. Though she paints a picture of herself as someone in need of a prop and protector, she always ends up by looking after, supporting and sacrificing herself for her friends. It is only in the final volumes (during analysis with a woman) that she confronts her identification with her mother, a sacrificial mother:

'My mother accumulated in us a sense of debt, a sense she had given her life to us, in contrast to the selfishness of my father.'

So lucidly does she trace the compulsive pattern of her relationships that I began to predict developments before they occurred. Her portraits of people are vivid and exact, provoking much gossip-level interest in the diaries, but they are enriched by her analysis of her personal relationships; what they give her, what she gives them.

'each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive.'

Anais Nin believed that men and women have inherently different natures. She was therefore particularly susceptible to the interpretation of the female stereotype pressed on her by her analysts. Drs Rene Allendy and Otto Rank both stated that woman was still an enigma as far as psychoanalysis was concerned, yet they confidently claimed that it was unnatural for a woman to be a professional writer.

Anais Nin left Rene Allendy because she realised he was trying to make her conform to a bourgeois norm, and categorising rather than interpreting her feelings. Otto Rank's influence upon her was more pervasive. He didn't preach adaptation but rather the creation of an inner reality which would act upon and mould the outer reality, making fulfilment possible. Yet he said to her:

'woman when cured of neurosis, enters life. Man enters art... you must discover what you want to be a woman or an artist.'

Anais Nin experienced painful conflict in attempting to come to terms with this stereotype. She wanted to be both 'in life' and to be an 'artist'. Love and personal relationships were support, stimulation and her chief source of inspiration. Yet she was made to believe that for a woman to be adventurous - to be an artist - was to be a social

outcast. She continually mentions, 'conflict between my feminine self who wants to live in a man ruled world, to live in harmony with men, and the creator in me capable of creating a world of my own.'... 'I am afraid to lose my personal intimate happiness in this drive towards growth and fulfillment.'

Nevertheless, writing was an absolute necessity to her. It was a basic way of communication, of avoiding loneliness:

'I can't talk. I can only talk through my novels'

She struggled to identify a means of creativity in line with her concept of femininity. Sometimes it led her into uneasy generalisations of woman as all instinct, dream and womb. But behind the generalisation is the theory that the role of the woman artist is to articulate the unconscious; to reveal the falsity of the much prized male objectivity.

'Women are so much more honest than men. A woman says 'I am jealous.' A man covers it up with a system of philosophy.'

She sees the diary as a specifically female form of creativity because in it she describes experience directly, without shaping it according to male laws of art. And within the diary she admits the influence that others have had on her:

'I do not delude myself as a man does that I create in proud isolation. I say we are bound, interdependent. Woman is not deluded.'

It is only really in Volume 3 that she begins to have constructive relationships with women (discounting June Miller)

'It is with Frances that I have deep evolutionary talks. We talk to understand ourselves and others, to dissolve pain.'

And as her number of women friends increase she begins to talk of 'we' rather than 'women':

'We wanted to imitate Valentina Orlikova. We saw ourselves as trim, efficient captains of our ship and our own lives. It was not a desire to be a man, but to be free and capable of self direction and professional growth.'

Much of the pleasure to be had from the diary lies in the description of her consciously created lifestyle; whether in her old organic house in Louviciennes - 'below the rug I felt was the earth' - aboard her house boat on the Seine, or in a New York hotel. She reveals so much that it was only at the end of Volume 1, with the sudden announcement of her pregnancy, that I became aware of the editing process; her husband is never mentioned. But at least the diaries have only been edited, so many people have wanted to suppress them altogether. Her analysts saw them as an inviolate island from where she could analyse them. She had her own views as to why Henry Miller and others wanted to silence the diaries:

'Henry says (the diary) should be nailed with a big nail on the wall of his

studio and muted forever, and I ask myself is it fear on the part of man, fear of a woman unveiling her own truth.'

She worried that by writing the diary she was sublimating her need to create and preventing herself from putting more into the novels. The novels are very stylized compared with the diaries; it humanises them to first read their raw material in the diaries. Anais Nin commented to the diary,

'Writing for a hostile world discouraged me. Writing for you gave me the illusion of a warm ambience I needed to flower in.'

A warm ambience for Anais Nin was dependent upon intimate one to one relationships - they were what she really valued:

'My social consciousness is different from that of Americans. It is not expressed in group work, in collective activity. It consists in giving help to the exceptional person who is struggling to educate himself'

This disbelief in the potential of collective activity was coupled with a pessimistic view of human nature based on psychoanalysis divorced from sociology and economics.

'I have built a rich private world, but I fear I cannot help build the world outside. Deep down, I feel, nothing changes the nature of man. I know only too well that man can only change himself psychologically, and that fear and greed make him inhuman, and it is only a change of roles we attain with each revolution, just a change of men in power that is all.'

It is hardly surprising that she adopted such a position. Her means of escape from feelings of estrangement from other people, and from her father's world of wealth and luxury, was to become part of a bohemian artistic elite. She spoke of herself as an artist opposed to the world of authority, power and destructiveness. Her friend/father figure/dependent Gonzalo tried to bring her to Marxism by burning her books, symbolically forcing her to give up her 'opium - the individually created world'. As the fire burnt down, she retrieved the charred remains, not surprisingly, still unconvinced and unable to connect her beliefs to any political movement.

Rosie Parker

17. 7. 1973

Mrs. Hilda Lass
Wien

Dear Mrs Lass,

The young lady coming to the Freud museum with you today bought a paper back on Freud and I suspect her of having left it here.

At least in Freud's house, to forget something here expresses a wish to come back one day. Please tell her, like every interested visitor she will be very welcome.



Yours,

(Hans Lobner)

1 Paper back

A letter from the Freud Museum, Vienna

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The Staff of the Bradford, her High School paper. Sylvia Plath is ringed.

A closer look at Ariel
a memory of Sylvia Plath
by Nancy Hunter Steiner,
with an afterword by
George Stade;
Faber, 90p

The posthumous Sylvia Plath occupies a strange space: appropriated by feminists and litterateurs, groups whose members rarely coincide. Her work has been defensively claimed by those for whom 'great' poetry transcends historical periods, and on the other hand by women in the movement who see her life, work and suicide as martyred monuments to the oppression of women.

But the picture is gradually being built up of real, rather than projected elements. The longest I have read so far is a section from a critical biography of Sylvia Plath written by Harriet Rosenstein as part of a thesis at Brandeis, and published in the American magazine MS in September 1972. In this claims for Plath's conscious 'feminism' are tested with reference to mentions of women in her work, and it seems clear from the evidence that she in fact saw



Sylvia Plath at the time of
her first suicide attempt

herself as set apart from other women, that she felt little or no solidarity with women, in spite of her acute ability to chronicle the pressures to which they were mutually subject.

A closer look at Ariel is a much more personal account of Sylvia Plath, written by her room-mate at Smith College during 1954-55, covering the year just after her first suicide attempt. It's a short but quite fascinating memoir, which provides a bit of a gloss on episodes in *The Bell Jar*, with a rather different account of for example, the 'reality' of Sylvia Plath hemorrhaging after being 'raped' from the one in the novel; Esther in the novel is cool and in control, Sylvia, according to her friend, was petrified of doctors and infinitely demanding.

Because of the absence of real documentary material about Sylvia Plath (letters, diaries, biographies by people who knew her) speculation about what she was really like, about her marital problems, about her feminism, have mushroomed. This account of her shows how she appeared to one person - talented, attractive, imperious, and also possessive, highly competitive and arrogant, with bouts of severe depression and insecurity when she couldn't live up to the expectations people had of her, and that she built for herself.

But perhaps most important, the essay sets her in a historical context; Nancy and Sylvia tried to be 'the typical American girl, the product of a hundred years of middle-class propriety', and it is clear that for all of those generations of post-war American girls, the strains to keep up the image were immense - not only for Sylvia Plath. This was the generation of women to whom Betty Friedan spoke ten years later, and wrote her findings up in *The Feminine Mystique*, girls who had been educated to expect great things from themselves, and then were squashed into Mrs Suburbia, with no identity to call their own.

The social environment of college life for women in the fifties does not, from this account appear to have made substantial strides from that described by Mary McCarthy in *The Group*; and this essay by Nancy Hunter Steiner is a welcome glimpse into that environment. A lot more reconstruction needs to be done before we have a solid picture of the period of the 'life' of Sylvia Plath - in particular a critical biography by someone who knew her during her last years in England.

Micheline Wandor

Chocolates by Posy Simmonds

Posy Simmonds draws chocolates as metaphors for women's proscribed role; round, soft centred chocolates. Her exhibition at the Workshop Gallery during February showed tough hearty schoolgirls' metamorphosing into vulnerable chocolates filled with sweet synthetic cream and topped with sugared rose and violet petals.

They create an accurate picture of the dichotomy between the world of a middle class girls boarding school and the realities of women's life outside the school gates. Posy's drawings, sparse,

and sensitively coloured, capture the hardness and heartiness of school life; the cold playing fields, the school photograph (shown as a key to a chocolate box with lines of Cherry Cup, Hazel Cluster etc.) and the hierarchy of prefects and captains - all of it modelled on the worst aspects of traditional boys' schools. But girls lay down hockey sticks to face a future as a commodity 'looking good enough to eat' for general consumption. Posy seems to suggest that for some (most?) the school years are so grim and alien that the sweet life seems infinitely preferable, but there are some centre forwards who can't adapt to passivity and always dream of the green green hockey fields of school.

The coloured drawings are certainly not propagandist; the strength and content of their message is dependent on the viewer. And, as Posy is an excellent cartoonist, some people may find them funny. The humour in them is self deprecatory - a form with a strong tradition among oppressed groups. The drawback for women as far as defensive humour is concerned is that humour is still being used against us. While it is considered insulting for anyone other than a Black or a Jew to tell put-down Black or Jewish jokes, male comedians continue to use women jokes as their stock in trade: the Dumb Blond joke, the Women Driver joke, the Mother-in-law joke, My Wife etc. Although I enjoyed Posy's exhibition, I couldn't laugh at the drawings - yet.

Rosie Parker



The Exorcist

Columbia-Warner

The Exorcist Warner

You must know the story by now – a 12 year old girl is possessed, that is to say she masturbates with a crucifix, announces herself as the devil, turns her head 180 degrees, levitates, vomits green bile, manifest messages as scars on her body, practices psychokinesis, zenoglossy and the like – and what you want to know is will I be sick in the auditorium if I see this picture?

Well, the answer is probably no you won't – although no harm in not seeing it late at night or stoned, and nervous dispositioners please stay at home.

So what is this phenomenon The Exorcist? Well firstly it is an exercise in money-making and public relations. The picture opened in the States on December 22 and already well over four million people have paid well over 10 million dollars to see it. It opened here on March 14 at five West End cinemas in London simultaneously and looks like setting the same sort of records. Audiences on that day staggered out of the dark cinemas to be greeted by batteries of film cameras, reporters and news teams all pushing for some horror-terror-shock reaction. If 121 minutes of pure horror is your idea of a Saturday night out or if you want to be up with the latest topic then The Exorcist is your movie, but if you are looking for anything else then forget it. Director Billy (The French Connection) Friedkin says "The film has no message. It's an actual case history." The case history dramatised by author-producer William Peter Blatty took place in 1949 to a 14 year old boy – now a happily married man of 38 with three children in St. Louis with no recollection of what happened. The film gives the impression that exorcisms rarely occur these days – but not so. The last reported exorcism to my knowledge appeared in the papers in the West Coast of America two months ago. However it is hard to find out many details as the Catholic Church keeps its files under lock and key. Nevertheless there has been an enormous increase of interest in the occult recently and it is already beginning to show up in British hospitals. Some cases of mental

disorder do not respond to orthodox therapies and so exorcism is becoming more common as a treatment. A psychiatrist with nine years of experience writing in the current issue of The Practitioner says "I have not seen more than half a dozen cases in all my life as a doctor, but I think they are becoming more frequent... I do not claim to turn up many genuine cases but when I do I have no hesitation in referring them for exorcism. To my critics I say that at worst it is a harmless form of mumbo-jumbo and at best it is life-saving and can mend broken lives." Well that is interesting because one of the few "messages" in the film is a biting indictment of the medical profession, portrayed as inept, insensitive and perpetrating painful diagnoses.

The trouble with the occult is that it spreads like a contagion, preying on the feeble-minded least able to cope with mysterious forces. And so with this film. It supports centuries' old notions of devils and possession without adding any new dimensions of understanding. So The Exorcist is 1970's-style entertainment! Entertainment?

Lyn Gambles

Theatre

To Die Among Friends by Michelene Wandor performed by The Paradise Foundry.

Just sometimes, you can have your cake and eat it too, with pleasure. Michelene Wandor's plays offer us chunks of the past, a past we as women share and one that makes me feel sick to remember. She has cut it up into slices, sifted the ingredients, and having analysed it, put it firmly back together again like a beautiful, flashy birthday cake so you can look at it behind the glass, watch the way the decoration glitters, without for a minute, being tempted to taste it again. Knowing, thank god, you're out on the pavement and it's sometimes windy, sometimes gritty, she talks about that

too: 'There is a feeling of excitement, tension. Something is happening', says the Younger woman to the Older woman in *Swallows*.

There are five plays, *Mal de Mere*, *Joey*, *Christmas*, *Pearls* and *Swallows* in sequence, only three of which I saw performed, *Christmas* and *Pearls* I've read. *Joey* is not as clear as the others. A male, J, and a female, M, can relate only through their friend Joey. He is not there, he's like an imaginary bouncer, tough, heavy, and without his presence the implication is that perhaps J and M could be honest with each other. As it is, in the childhood/grown up world through which their relations move, he is constantly used to taunt or threaten or compare themselves with.

He is the intrusion, the figurehead of the nuclear family brooding between them, the barter for their possessiveness and insecurity, even while he's their mate. Like the others, this play is structured around a dialogue between two performers, but perhaps his actual, rather than mythical presence, might make the exchange relations more understandable. When J and M stop talking to one another and act out their mini plays, their words fall into a sort of vacuum instead of being as stubbornly effective as in *Mal de Mere* and *Swallows*.

Which is not to say the plays aren't also funny. Never before have I been so moved by a play. I was dumbfounded, rivetted and finally felt triumphant. It's very important to have the opportunity to see bits of our lives crystallised in such a way, and gain strength from such reflection. As in *Pearls* when the She of the couple in a determined way, says to her partner who, still somewhat confused and hesitant, is trying to understand the changes She's making in their relationship: 'Oh, I can't stand it either. But I find it helps to look from the past to the present and then to the future, then back again – you know, moving all the time from one to the other. A strain on the eyes and feet.

He: There's no choice is there.'

She answers no, not anymore. And in case you want to slink uncomfortably off into the old paths, there's the horror, the chilling mindlessness of *Mal de Mere*, the first play, to remind you of the chaos we'd be recreating if we didn't change. A and V, the mother, the doll, the baby, the little girl growing up, in an invisible circle they act out roles that make you dizzy, pass out words that whisper, that make the circle a hole into the dungeons, falling, falling into madness. Jenny's Mum, already a wicked witch, provokes hysterical anger in her daughter as she imprisons her with kindness. Threads of the little girl who likes 'the bit of school where they read books' appear later in *Pearls* when She says her words aren't important while her husband comments (this time he's the mindless one), 'Well, yes, I do believe the critic has a role in the world today.'

The woman can't escape the prison on her own. In *Swallows* she becomes again a little girl, Y, in order to become again, a woman. O, the older woman, analyst, whoever, takes away her glasses, plays games with Y's eyesight, how Y sees the world, sees her, till Y revolts. O's a bitch, then, when Y discovers the power of being herself, O calls her a bitch, angry at Y's per-

ception. Both, taken aback and realising dependency on each other, begin to show some tenderness. The Younger woman wants O to share the new world she's discovering but O says she's too old, while Y has become again a woman alongside and because of other women like her. Having tasted freedom and solidarity, such an appetite enables her to answer O's final question, 'What is your aim? Y: To die among friends.'

Rather more external, is the third play, *Christmas*. Here is the relationship between two boys who become men. Once friends at school, A, who's getting 'at least hundred exactly' presents for Xmas, gets to be the boss of B. B has a wife who leaves him briefly when he goes on strike, while A's wife, by this time, has gone for good. A doesn't care, 'the escort agency's always been reliable' (sounds like the butcher), even though he can no longer buy B's loyalty with a drink. Here, the implicit connections between the social relations of the characters in the rest of the plays and the relations of production become explicit. There's no escaping the way all the games, the prisons, the feelings, are tied up with the economic reality. There will always be the emotional barrenness of the men, the emotional overflow drowning the women in the family, until some hands can reach out and share a bit of what the other has too much of. B is shown to realise about his boss, A, 'If I reached out my hand in sympathy, he'd chop it off and then retire me on an inadequate disablement pension.' And later, when A says about women, 'Come on man, you're the boss', it sinks in and B understands somewhat the way he also oppresses his wife.

Michelene has probed away and got the language right. Subtle changes go on, until two friends become enemies, and/or their own enemies. In *Pearls*, She shows how change is not 'simply a matter of will' as He would have it, defending his old principles. 'Jargon, political jargon', He says. 'Anything can become jargon if you don't want to understand it', She replies. Michelene has developed the plays so the meaning is there, layers between and levels across in a complex way. The audience gets mixed up, woven in between them all. Depending on your own political consciousness, your comprehension gets caught at certain points, but there's no way you won't be touched somewhere and involved.

Marsha Rowe

★ Paradise Foundry are now touring.

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This month, Julia and I got together in an effort to clear the backlog of unmentioned albums. Since *Spare Rib* is not a music paper, we aren't tied to just current releases, we have the freedom to talk about records you may have missed in the past.

However a recent release is *Joni Mitchell's* new album *'Court and Spark'* (*Asylum*). It is her sixth, and will no doubt prove to be one of her most successful. 'Raised on Robbery', the track which was also released as a single, shows her style broadening into a much more funky sound than is usual for her. Her lyrics continue to reflect inner confusion: the woman trapped but unable to understand why, the woman sitting at home waiting for the phone to ring, the woman feeling lost in the crowd at a party, and the woman trying to remain true to herself and yet face the commercial world.

Musical contributions include Robbie Robertson from The Band and José Feliciano, with vocal back up from David Crosby and Graham Nash. Some beautiful piano arrangements from Joni Mitchell, and all the songs are self-penned except 'Twisted', a satirical song about analysts, written by jazz singer/composer Annie Ross.

'Please Love Me' (*Buddah*) is the title of *Melanie's* recent release and it left us feeling quite confused. To begin with we found it compelling listening, a melancholy mood pervades every track. Songs like 'Mamma momma' are strangely disturbing, Julia felt it smacked very much of Lennon and primal screams, on a particularly self-indulgent level. We found it became less convincing after listening to it several times, the escapist themes avoid confrontation at any level but how much this has to do with the fact that most of the songs were written for the sound track of a film, we don't know.

Maria Muldaur's first solo album (*Warner*) is lighter and happier. New to us, we found her country blues songs a welcome change. She's backed by an impressive list of session musicians, including Jim Keltner, Klaus Voorman and also Clarence White who sadly died last year. The song to listen to is 'Three Dollar Bill', it's typical of her combination of optimism and obvious insight into relationships and life in general.

Vocally backing Maria Muldaur was *Gloria Jones* who also has a new album entitled *'Share My Love'* (*Tamla Motown*). In the past she has written songs for Gladys Knight, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross and the Four Tops, and she part-wrote all the songs but one on this LP. Her experience as backing vocalist for many albums and tours has given her voice a rich maturity. But it is unnecessarily smothered by over orchestrated arrangements, a



Joni Mitchell



Gloria Jones

problem that many solo female artists suffer from, and hence the album is nowhere near as good as it could be.

Madeline Bell's solo LP *'Comin Atcha'* (*RCA*) was released in November '73. She has been singing for years, again as back up vocals on albums and tours, and also in 'Blue Mink'. She co-wrote all the songs with John Paul Jones who also arranged and produced the album and played all the instruments on at least half the tracks. The arrangements match her voice well, she sounds soulful and very confident and sings of growing, being free and wanting to know. Effective use of instruments, especially keyboards, and the backing vocals, which are often a hindrance on many albums, compliment the overall sound and hopefully make this album the platform to give Madeline Bell the recognition she has so long deserved.

Also released last November and in total contrast is *Asha Puthli's* first solo album (*CBS*). She appears to be a victim of the super-star syndrome via Warhol's Factory and New York. Undoubtedly, she is gifted vocally, but we frequently felt at odds with her seductive style of singing. Slightly over produced, the arrangements of the songs including Lennon's 'Love', two ex-Velvet Underground J.J. Cale numbers and one from Neil Sedaka are nonetheless interesting. But her version of George Harrison's 'I Dig Love' says it all. Needing love could well be the cause of Asha Puthli's overplayed bid for stardom, which seems a sad misdirection of energy.

One side of *'Manhole'* (*RCA*), *Grace Slick's* album released in February is the theme from the movie 'Manhole', for which she wrote the music and the lyrics. Possibly at her best, she soars powerfully through, with full orchestral support. "Spanish wind keeps telling me how it feels to sing free. It keeps blowing on me, keeps showing me another way to listen". The words, partly in phonetic Spanish, are printed in the strange accompany-



Melanie Safka



Madeline Bell



Grace Slick

ing booklet. Side two has a mixture of songs, the most impressive being 'Better Lying Down', which is just Grace and a slow, sleazy, blues piano.

'Pressure Cookin' is the title track of Patti Labelle, Sarah Dash and Nona Hendryx's new album released in February this year. Now collectively known as *Labelle* but minus Cindy Birdsong who joined the Supremes, they were once known as Patti Labelle and the Bluebells until they formed a working relationship with Vicki Wickam. You may recall she produced the '60's VV programme 'Ready Steady Go'. As well as producing them, she has updated their 'image' and material from ballads like 'Over the Rainbow' to more smooth and soulful but rather unimaginative arrangements. Nona Hendryx wrote seven of the nine numbers, the other two being a Stevie Wonder track and a song which combines the Thunderclap Newman hit 'Something in the Air' with a radical poem entitled 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised'. This poignant, satirical send-up of advertising blurb and the media, deserves a complete reprint, but sadly we really don't have enough space. However, for that, it is very definitely worth trying to hear.

'Queen Of The Night' (*Polydor*) is *Maggie Bell's* much awaited first solo LP since Stone The Crows split up in early 1973. Maggie Bell does have a strong and effective voice, but frankly



Maria Muldaur



Asha Puthli



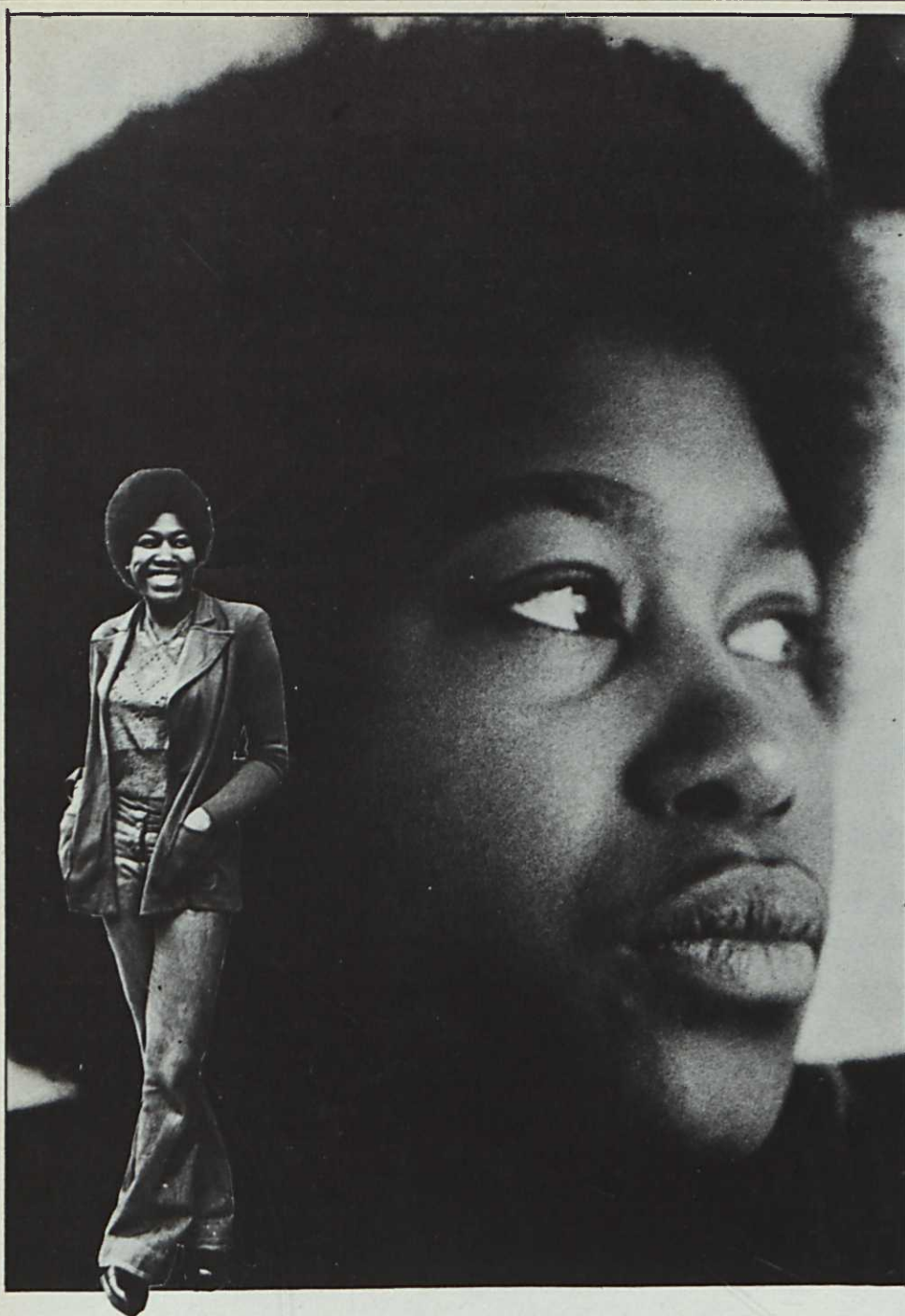
Labelle



Maggie Bell

we feel it's disappointing. It is produced by Jerry Wexler, who is responsible for Aretha Franklin's recording career, and where Aretha's last album suffered slightly, this one, at times, is blatantly commercial. It's too neatly sewn-up, too slick. Though 'A Woman Left Lonely', J.J. Cale's 'After Midnight' and the title track provide a competent showcase for Maggie's voice, she seems to be trying to fit in with arrangements that just don't suit her. It's a shame, perhaps we were expecting too much. However, her record company need not fear, it's bound to sell, she's been voted Top Female Singer by the music press for two consecutive years.

Julia Shaw and Marion Fudger



Joan Armatrading: A victim of the minimization of women's contribution to music.

Joan Armatrading: Accomplished pianist, guitarist, singer and songwriter is exceptional. You haven't heard of her before? Ah well there's no glitter you see, no glamour. She doesn't offer the music press a sensational angle, and as we know too well, their appetite mysteriously wanes when a woman refuses to compromise her sexuality.



by Marion Fudger

'I am not



photo by Derek Davies

She was born in St. Kitts in the West Indies and came to England at eight years old. Her family live in Birmingham but she moved away a couple of years ago and now shares a flat in North London.

When I went to talk to Joan, she had a really heavy cold and was feeling a bit 'slow'. I thought I'd take her a bottle of something to cheer her up, but at the last minute bought some grapes instead – just as well, it turned out she didn't drink or smoke. She seems a self-contained person, naturally warm but instinctively cautious of people. 'I've always been pretty much on my own really because I'm sort of bang in the middle of my family. My brothers wouldn't go round with me when I was young, they're 28 and 27 and then there's me, I'm 23 then my other sister is 13 and my younger brothers are 12 and 11. So I'm sort of the odd one out'.

Her Dad played in a prominent band in the West Indies and her sister Jacqueline is learning too. Joan taught herself and has played piano for two years and guitar for five, drums too, but 'only a bit, not that it's worth mentioning'.

She never practices as such. 'The way I do it is, I sit down and work it all out when I'm writing something, then that's a practice. I don't practice singing, I know people do, but I worry a lot about what I'm playing'.

Financially, Joan finds it hard going, and as many musicians do initially, she was thinking of doing some part-time work, 'What I thought I'd do was some office cleaning and work for about three hours a day, but I couldn't get it to quite work out because I'd start playing and by the time I'd finished it was time to go to bed. I keep thinking 'well I'll do it tomorrow'. When I get down to writing, I work really long hours and it's hard work. Then I went on the dole for a while, and that paid the rent'.

Her album 'Whatever For Us' (Cube) released in November '72 had enthusiastic reviews but her record company say 'though the media reaction was almost unprecedented for a new artist, it sold abysmally'. I remember John Peel playing some tracks from it on his shows at the time, but the majority of airtime is coveted for proven success formulae and Joan Armatrading is not commercial. 'I must admit I was a bit pleased when that album wasn't a success'.

going to sing nursery rhymes!



Pam Nestor



photos courtesy of Cube records

said Joan 'it had so many good reviews and if it had been a big success on top of all that, I'd have been in trouble for the next one.'

The next one, provisionally entitled 'Steppin' Out' hasn't arrived yet, problems in finding the right musicians have delayed it, though she has written more than enough songs. Pam Nestor, who wrote the lyrics to most of the songs on 'Whatever's For Us' met Joan in '69 when they formed a working relationship. 'Pam usually writes personal lyrics but mine are about anything but me. I don't want to write things about what I think because then everybody knows 'oh that's what she is.' It obviously doesn't matter because other people do it but what I say isn't too hot anyway. But sometimes I like listening to lyrics that mean nothing - I mean you can sing words that just sound nice. I'm writing more lyrics on the next album though, one of them 'Steppin' Out' is about people getting away from other people, being sort of tied to them and if you can't feel anything for somebody, you should get on with trying to live your life, you know?'

In the same self-conscious way, Joan finds it difficult to talk about herself. 'It has got easier, well look, if you'd have tried to talk to me a year ago, I couldn't have said anything to you. I mean I'm really chatting a lot. I can go up to people and start talking about them though. I did an interview in America once, it was really heavy and sort of political as well, like why don't I just play black places and why are all my audiences white. But they're not, at least they were in America but that wasn't really my fault. But I don't want to be told what to do, I'm not singing just for black people or white, whoever wants to listen to it, can listen to it. Say if you take the words, then anybody can take the words and make them theirs.'

'Playing is better than talking' is Joan's dictum and being a musician is her outlet for self-expression. The amount of creative energy she channels into her music can be gauged by the result. Her style is strong and though evolved from a blues base, the melodic arrangements of guitar and piano coupled with her instinctive feel for note patterns, transform her voice into another instrument. The blend is unique. She was recently at Ronnie Scott's Club in London for three weeks but I felt it was the wrong place for her - and so did she. Not just because it was a jazz club with a small incompatible

audience, but because entrance was £1.90, she didn't go on until 11.30p.m., drinks were exorbitant, plus the club rules of having to eat whether you wanted to or not. It seemed a waste. However, she previewed the numbers due to be on her next album and proved that she is equally as good, whether accompanying herself on guitar or piano, or backed by a band - which she prefers.

She has done several tours, though she feels she hasn't really been very busy. She had a particularly successful time in Holland with Country Joe's band and then last July when her single 'Lonely Lady' was released, she went to America. 'I wouldn't go to America on my own again, it seemed like forever, I spent the first six weeks really wanting to come back. People said the shows were alright, I suppose they were but I didn't know, because I was too busy being miserable, but the last three weeks I really enjoyed. When I came back I was supposed to start the next album and then go back again this month. Next time I'm going with a band, but in a funny sort of way it was good that I went on my own. In Chicago I was supposed to play with about four other groups but one by one they cancelled and I ended up headlining the show. It was funny because there was no publicity, nobody had ever heard of me and I opened on some big holiday - Labour Day I think - when everybody goes away and they did. It was a big place and there was just me and the waitresses there. That was the best time though, it was much better. The biggest audience that week was about forty people, but I enjoyed it more than all the other places I'd played.

Joan's unpretentiousness is also reflected by the way she dresses. She wears the same clothes on and off stage. 'You know it's such an effort not to go on stage in this cardigan, I live in it and that jacket you saw me in. I've had so much bother with my managers over that jacket. I had another manager before this one and they try and say "well I think maybe you should wear a dress or something". But it's no good saying that because I won't do it, I couldn't, I don't wear dresses. They say "well at least look a bit smarter", well I have this other jacket that's a bit smarter but I feel horrible in it. But they're no bother now, because they've made up their minds that that's how I'm going to be and that's how I want it, so they just have to take it.

I did some photos once and I had this long

argument with this guy about taking off my jacket. I like being well covered, I don't see the point in doing all that anyway, people don't think any more of you. You don't have to let them make you do anything you don't want to do. I don't think it helps us, all these sweet singers with their little dresses. I suppose they think that's the way they've got to sing. Men have said 'look, you've got to sing pretty because you're made that way', but there are lots of women about with voices that aren't pretty but they seem so used to dressing up and things, that they're frightened to change or something. Joni Mitchell's new album is lovely, funky too, I mean she sings pretty but it's not pretty. I'd never be bored by her or Maggie Bell and what about Jaki Whitren? I really like her voice, she plays nice guitar as well. I guess black women don't sing so sweet because they haven't been brainwashed so much into thinking they've got to be weak - the opposite, they've got to be strong, so they just get on with it. They're probably just more used to it. You know, a load of people and audiences are set in their minds about women singers, once they see a woman walk on stage with a guitar, it doesn't matter that I walk on dressed the way I am, they still think I'm going to be all sweet. It makes me annoyed that they're thinking it, because I know they're thinking it. Like sometimes I feel like saying 'I'm not going to sing nursery rhymes!' Because they're expecting you to do it, they take a while before they listen and then they realise that you're not actually doing it. But that makes me a bit annoyed.

Before I go on stage, I'm really nervous, it's a bit silly because sometimes I get really sort of sick nervous, then it depends on how happy I am. If I'm not very happy, I usually stay nervous right to the end, but if I'm really happy by the second or third number, I'm alright. When the album came out, to begin with, all I was interested in was getting people to hear the songs, I didn't really want to go on stage and sing but now it's not as bad as I thought at first, although I'm still not a hundred percent for it.'

People can't continue to remain deaf to Joan Armatrading for much longer, she will win through on sheer talent and hopefully in her wake, other women will have the confidence to refuse to concede to the music industry's ignorant and oppressive female success formulae. ■



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